



University of Tennessee, Knoxville

## TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange

---

Doctoral Dissertations

Graduate School

---

12-2012

# A Case Study of Two Exemplary Black Cultural Centers in Higher Education

Demetrius D. Richmond  
*Univeristy of TN-Knoxville, drichmon@utk.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_graddiss](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss)



Part of the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Richmond, Demetrius D., "A Case Study of Two Exemplary Black Cultural Centers in Higher Education. " PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2012.  
[https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_graddiss/1554](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/1554)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [trace@utk.edu](mailto:trace@utk.edu).

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Demetrius D. Richmond entitled "A Case Study of Two Exemplary Black Cultural Centers in Higher Education." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Higher Education Administration.

E. Grady Bogue, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Norma T. Mertz, Steven Waller, Vincent Anfara

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**A Case Study of Two Exemplary Black Cultural Centers  
In Higher Education**

**A Dissertation presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
University of Tennessee-Knoxville**

**By  
Demetrius D. Richmond  
December 2012**

Copyright © Demetrius D. Richmond

All rights reserved.

## **Dedication**

*This dissertation is dedicated to all those who have come before me and made this possible. It's also dedicated to all my family, friends, and colleagues who encouraged me. I am not an island and it takes a village. We did this together!*

To my beautiful and nurturing life partner, Chrissy Hannon Richmond, you have supported me through every part of this process. Thanks for listening, empathizing, and helping me stay committed. I could not have made it without you. We did it! You are next!

To my Knoxville family, you know who you are. Thanks for being here and inspiring me to give more of myself.

To the 15 participants in the study and the amazing Black Cultural Centers, to my dissertation committee chair, Dr. E. Grady Bogue, the rest of my committee Dr. Norma Mertz, Dr. Steven Waller, and Dr. Vincent Anfara...thanks for stepping up and pushing me when things seemed uncertain. Your continued guidance and support will be cherished. Because of you I have grown in the academy.

## Acknowledgements

“I am because we are.” It is imperative that I recognize all of those who helped me academically, professionally, and personally throughout this life changing experience.

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, the universe, for allowing the space for this take place in my life. This process has truly taught me that there is something greater than me in this reality, and I am truly humbled to partake in this life journey.

To my wife, you are amazing and I thank you for taking this journey with me. With both of us pursuing doctoral degrees, there have been many ebbs and flows. It has taught us to communicate and rely on our love. The world awaits us, together we will explore it! Also, my mother-in-law and father-in law, your support and advice have been very encouraging. Thank you for contextualizing the academy for me and helping me realize that this is so much bigger than me. Thanks for the meals and long conversations about higher education and America. I look forward to more!

To my Knoxville family of young African American scholars, practitioners, and professionals, you have made this experience very memorable: Dr. Ferlin McGaskey, Dr. D.J. Baker, Dr. Theresa Cooper, Tierney Bates, Alicia Cottrell, Esq., Dr. Chutney Walton Guyton, Eric and Jamia Stokes, Tracia Cloud, Tyvi Small, and Landon Dukes. You all know the effort that it took me to endure this academic journey. You listened, encouraged, challenged, hollered, and inspired me. I will cherish my memories and experiences in East TN because you taught me the meaning of blooming where I’m planted and making an impact no matter the destination. Thank you for showing me that there is hope for my community and that we can elevate our existence. The world is not ready for us!

There are other names that escape me right now, so don’t charge it to my heart. I am grateful to every cohort member, faculty member, community person, undergraduate student, and co-worker that poured into my life and showed me that everything is within me.

## ABSTRACT

Despite their long-standing history and contribution to the success of Black students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), many Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) face uncertain futures, and others do not. Some BCCs have closed, some have been transformed in name and mission, and some have persevered and have become "exemplar" centers. These exemplary centers have been expanded and given more responsibility and resources by their institutions, and are clearly not feeling a threat to their identity or future. In a time when so many BCCs at PWIs are under threat, what is it about some centers that allows them to survive and thrive? What differentiates them from those that are imperiled by threats to their existence? Using a multi-site case study approach, the purpose of this study was to discern the factors that characterize exemplary BCCs at two PWIs.

For this study data were collected using the following strategies: individual semi-structured interviews, field notes, document analysis, and observations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 faculty, staff, alumni, and students across two unique campus settings. The study examined the characteristics of exemplary BCCs individually and across campuses.

Through data cross analysis six central themes emerged that depicted the shared factors that mark exemplary BCCs at PWIs. These included: a). Leadership & Legacy Make the Difference b). Building Campus Connections at All Levels; c). Remaining Relevant and Advancing the Institution; d). Community Engagement and

Collaboration; e). Student Ownership and a “Call to Action”; and f). Alumni Engagement and Involvement. Institutionalization, the theoretical framework, was also found to be a factor common to exemplary centers, but it is manifested in different ways depending on the campus.

Key findings indicated that exemplary BCCs are a major part of the university fabric and play a significant role in the Black undergraduate student experience. These findings are crucial to future research pertaining to BCCs. Administrators, BCC staff, faculty and students at other campuses with BCCs can gain a greater understanding of how BCCs impact PWIs. This study can also be viewed as a foundational tool for establishing, improving and continuing the tradition of BCCs at PWIs.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 -- INTRODUCTION.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	9
Purpose of the Study.....	9
Definition of Terms .....	12
Research Questions.....	9
Delimitations.....	10
Limitations.....	10
Significance of the Study.....	10
Organization of the Dissertation.....	13
CHAPTER 2 -- REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	14
Introduction.....	14
Evolution of BCCs in Higher Education.....	14
Role & Function of BCCs: Past.....	20
Role & Function of BCCs: Present.....	22
Challenges, Threats, & Developmental Paths.....	29
Theoretical Framework.....	30
CHAPTER 3 -- METHOD & DESIGN.....	43
Design & Rationale.....	43
Role of the Researcher .....	46
Sites & Sample.....	50

Data Acquisition Strategies.....	56
Interviews .....	56
Observations .....	58
Documents .....	58
Field Notes.....	57
Data Analysis Strategies.....	59
Methods of Ensuring Trustworthiness.....	62
CHAPTER 4 -- SITE: UNIVERSITY I.....	63
University I.....	63
Mission.....	63
History.....	66
Comprehensive Tour.....	75
Observation.....	81
Analysis of Interviews & Other Data.....	84
CHAPTER 5 -- SITE: UNIVERSITY II.....	107
University II.....	107
Mission.....	107
History .....	111
Comprehensive Tour.....	118
Observation.....	121
Analysis of Interviews & Other Data.....	124
CHAPTER 6 -- FINDINGS AND CROSS ANALYSIS.....	144

Exemplary Characteristics.....	145
Leadership & Legacy Make the Difference.....	146
Building Campus Connections at All Levels.....	155
Remaining Relevant & Advancing the Institution.....	158
Local Community Engagement and Collaboration.....	160
Ownership & A Spirit of “Call to Action” From Students.....	162
Alumni Engagement & Involvement.....	165
Additional Similarities/Differences from Observation.....	167
Differences.....	169
Institutionalization.....	171
Evidence Markers.....	175
CHAPTER 7 – SUMMARY – DISCUSSION – IMPLICATIONS.....	178
References.....	188
Appendices.....	202
Vita.....	207

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

*“There are social differences between the races in this country, and one tends to feel most comfortable in a social setting with members of one’s own cultural group...”*

Stuart Johnson, 1991, p. 158

Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) have existed on Predominantly White college campuses since the late 1960s (Young, 1986). As Black student enrollment began to increase significantly at PWIs, Black students began to search for sources on campus to counteract their experiences with racism and marginalization -- such as un-empathetic faculty/staff, lack of student involvement opportunities, isolated living experiences, and unwelcoming student interactions (Young, 1986). This eventually led to campus protests that pressured administrations to provide more support for Black students, such as African Studies Programs and “safe spaces” on campus. Thus, BCCs were designed to help Black students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) cope with struggles of alienation, loneliness, and isolation in such environments, as well as serve as safe havens or a “home away from home” (Princes, 1994). Today, BCCs have grown to serve wider purposes on college campuses, including minority student recruitment, student retention, academic support, and diversity awareness (Patton, 2007).

Despite their long-standing history, their undeniable contribution to the success of Black students at PWIs (Fleming, 1981; Patton, 2006; Young, 1986), and their service

to the broader institutional mission (Patton, 2007), BCCs face significant contemporary challenges that seem to threaten their existence. To illustrate, Hefner (2002) referred to BCCs as being “under attack” and “standing on shaky ground due to obstacles including “good old-fashioned competition,” particularly from the emergence of multicultural centers (MCCs) that have begun to replace BCCs at many PWIs (p. 22-23). Additionally, this threat is more evident due to the increase of anti-affirmative action court rulings in higher education and even the current national economic downturn facing state and institutional budgets and resources, thus calling for many BCCs to validate their importance at PWIs to remain relevant (Hord, 2006). Other major challenges include: the BCCs’ ability to recognize and adequately support the ever-changing needs of students, faculty, community, and the university; shrinking campus budgets that reduce the resources devoted to units such as BCCs; and increasing diversity in American higher education that brings new and different students to campus who need their “own” culturally relevant resources (Bankhole, 1994; Princes, 1994). The overall threat, as Hefner suggested, is that “Black centers either will be pushed to compromise their African-centered foundations in order to appeal to other ethnic groups or...drop the “Black” title all together and become “Multicultural” centers” (p. 1).

In light of competing funding priorities and increasing demands for limited fiscal resources, BCCs have come under increased scrutiny in terms of their return on investment — that is, the impact of BCCs on students and campus life (Hefner, 2002; Hord, 2006). Because administrators are more and more concerned about accountability

in terms of student success and fiscal restraints, campus units are now using retention and assessment to validate their existence, including BCCs (Patton, 2007). Because some campuses have invested extensive human and financial resources into BCCs, these centers are consistently being highly scrutinized in terms of their impact on students and their mission significance today (Hord, 2006).

Faced with the pressures outlined above, the existence of many BCCs is challenged by moments of uncertainty and transition. At the same time, a few have been able to maintain an encouraging level of autonomy and stability (Anderson, 1990). For instance, fiscal restrictions and political competitions have led to closure of some BCCs (e.g., San Francisco State) or conversion to MCCs (e.g., Texas A&M University). On the other hand, some BCCs have persisted with no change (e.g., LSU-Baton Rouge), or even expanded (e.g., The Ohio State University, Indiana University, University of Tennessee-Knoxville).

There are other examples of BCCs that have struggled, transitioned, or persisted in the face of challenges. Consider the Multi-Cultural Center at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville which struggled to maintain its founding BCC focus. Hefner (2002) reported that it initially was conceived as a Black Cultural Center. However, when it was eventually established in the early 1990s, it was designated a multicultural center, due to administrative concern about outcries from non-Black students, institutional politics, and being able to serve those student populations with limited resources. Another example concerns The African American Cultural Center at North Carolina State University that was predicted to transition to a multicultural center

(Hefner, 2002). Iyailu Moses, the university's vice provost, revealed that an external committee reviewed the 11-year-old cultural center; and in concert with the university's administration, the committee allegedly suggested that the center was moving in "a new direction" with a new multicultural mission instead of maintaining an African American focus. After students, alumni, and the Raleigh community began protesting, the university reportedly changed its stance of shifting to a multicultural center. These are more examples that show that many BCCs at PWIs struggle to justify their existence and face uncertain futures (Hefner, 2002; Hord 2006).

While many BCCs at PWIs face uncertain futures, some do not. Several have been expanded and given more responsibility and resources by their institutions, and are clearly not feeling a threat to their identity or future. One example would be the Frank W. Hale Black Cultural Center at The Ohio State University. Boasting a nearly 20,000 square foot facility, it has been hailed as one of the finest BCCs in the country due to its elaborate and comprehensive facility. Established on July 11, 1989, the Hale Black Cultural Center has been renovated twice. Phase I was to allow for its social, cultural and educational purposes; and Phase II added an academic wing to the center. Additionally, the Hale Center is considered one of the few Centers in the country known for its comprehensive academic and cultural/programming components (<http://oma.osu.edu/current-students/hale-black-cultural-center/>). In a time when so many BCCs at PWIs are under threat, what is it about centers like the Hale Center that allows them to survive and thrive? What differentiates them from those that are imperiled by threats to their existence? While we know that some BCCs close or face

uncertainty and others flourish, we know little about the factors that facilitate their stability and ability to survive and thrive as in the example above.

Some BCCs have closed, some have been transformed in name and mission, some have persevered and have become "exemplary" centers. Seemingly all centers that survive and thrive have elements of excellence, but those that are identified as "exemplary" centers appear to possess a staying power with long-term stability and institutional support that sets them apart from the others. An exemplary BCC is one that has been identified as "exemplary" by a panel of leading professionals in the Association of Black Cultural Centers (ABCC) and executives having experience with and knowledge of BCCs across the nation (personal communication, 2011, Fred Hord). The nomination/panel and identification process of "exemplary" centers will be described more fully and completely in Chapter III in the section on Research Design and Methods.

### **Conceptual Framework--Institutionalization**

While there are several definitions of Institutionalization, Zucker's (1977) concept of Institutionalization as both a process and a property variable seems fitting as it relates to understanding exemplary BCCs. Tolbert and Zucker (1999) focus on Institutionalization as a qualitative state, in that structures are institutionalized through processes and evidence markers. They discuss the process of Institutionalization from the notion of habitualized actions or institutions which are "behaviors that have been ...adopted by an actor in order to solve recurring problems" (p. 174), and they conclude that the process of institutionalizing structures involves three sequential processes.



Habitualization (Phase 1) is the development of new structural arrangements in response to a specific organizational problem or set of problems. Also classified as the pre-Institutionalization stage, this is where an organization responds with formalized new structures or changes to those problems, but they tend to be relatively temporary, often lasting until only for the length of leadership's tenure. Objectification (Phase 2) moves towards a more permanent and widespread status. It involves the development of some degree of social consensus among organizational decision-makers concerning the value of a new structure and increases that needed change based on that consensus. New structures in this phase have become fairly widely diffused and are described as being at the stage of semi-Institutionalization because adopters are still uncertain about consistent evidence of the quality of the new structure. Sedimentation (Phase 3) involves full Institutionalization because it includes complete diffusion of new structures across the group and has historical continuity over a lengthy period of time, It is evidenced by the combined effects of relatively low resistance by opposing groups, continued cultural support, promotion by advocacy groups, and positive correlations with desired outcomes.

But how do we know that a unit is institutionalized? What are the evidence markers? Berger and Luckman (1967) suggested an additional aspect of Institutionalization related to property variable (evidence markers). They term it "exteriority." This refers to the "degree to which typifications are experienced as possessing a reality of their own...as an external and coercive fact" (p. 58). Ultimately

they refer to sedimentation (Institutionalization) as the stage through which “actions acquire the quality of exteriority” (p. 75). In this study, this concept may provide a conceptual backdrop that may help identify those “exteriority” evidences or markers for exemplary BCCs. These markers may include: stability of mission over time, markers of organizational acceptance, inclusion in formal university budgets and organizational charts, performance reviews/evaluations as other units, a formally appointed chief executive, strategic plans, and a well-recognized and appointed facility, etc. These are evidence markers to which one can identify an exemplary BCC which is perhaps also institutionalized. Indeed this also aligns with the evidence markers as identified by the professional opinion of the Board of Trustees of the Association of Black Culture Centers (ABCC), who have identified an informal assessment of exemplary BCC markers. These will be described more fully and completely in Chapter II the Review of Literature. It is conceivable that the exemplary status of those BCCs may be attributable to their being institutionalized. These centers appear to have become “institutionalized” in the sense that they occupy a stable and well accepted place in the university’s organizational structure.

In summary, Zucker’s (1977) notion of Institutionalization as a process and as property variable (evidence markers) will serve as the conceptual framework for this study. While it is one lens or attempt to understand exemplary BCCs, this conceptual framework influenced the study by shaping what is focused on for at least one of the research questions, and is a lens that will be used to collect and analyze the data. It will

also be used to make meaning of the findings should it prove to be a defining factor for exemplary BCCs.

### **The Problem**

While it is clear that some BCCs have become institutionalized and have further been recognized by national BCC leadership as models or "exemplars," there is no significant evidence on the factors that associate with the achievement of "exemplary" status. Scholars who study BCCs tend to focus on their history, their espoused purpose and mission, and recently their impact on college student learning and development (Hord, 2006; Patton, 2007; Princes, 1994). Absent from the literature are empirical studies that explain why some BCCs at PWIs, survive and thrive, in spite of a climate of challenge to such entities--and not to just survive and thrive, but literally be the exemplars. This is the gap addressed by the present study.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to discern the factors that characterize exemplary BCCs at two Predominantly White institutions. Using a multi-site case study approach, this study specifically seeks to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the factors associated with being an exemplary BCC?
- (2) What are the common factors associated with being an exemplary BCC across institutions?
- (3) How does Institutionalization relate as a common factor to exemplary BCCs?

## **Significance of Study**

The information leveraged from this study is important for a number of reasons. First, this study will provide qualitative information about the staying power of exemplary BCCs that are thriving and surviving in lieu of threats to their existence. When applied to other centers at PWIs, this study can serve as a preliminary litmus test by BCC and campus administrators to determine the extent to which their centers are exemplary or ways to move toward such status. It can also lend some clarification for current faculty, staff, and students on how to strategize to become an exemplary BCC on their campuses. Second, there have been very few published empirical studies on BCCs. While commentary evidence seems to be the prevailing source of information about BCCs, there is no literature that examines the factors that make some BCCs exemplary. This study will contribute information to the literature we do not currently have on this.

## **Delimitations of Study**

Several delimitations deserve mention. The first delimitation of this study is that it focused on two exemplary BCC at two urban PWIs, one public and one private. There are BCCs at various types of institutions throughout the country at varying levels of function and operation; thus, the findings may not be applicable to BCCs at other types of institutions. The second limitation surrounds the use of the conceptual framework on Institutionalization. There may be other lenses or theoretical concepts that may be

overlooked by using this concept, so that limited the applicability of the findings as well.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While every effort was made to ensure trustworthiness, several limitations are apparent in this study. First, is the lack of generalizability, which is inherent in a qualitative case study approach. Second, is the self-reported data from the interviews which may also limit the findings. Finally, nominator bias was a factor of limitation. The participants in the study were selected by the Directors of each center, which limited the availability of opportunities to acquire various types of participants. Therefore, others who could have participated in the study were not able to because they weren't recommended. While I asked the nominator to recommend a wide variety of students, faculty, and administrators, nominator bias may have caused the selection of certain individuals who would speak highly of the BCC on campus. While this did not seem to be the case, the possibility exists.

Another limitation of this study is length. A longer study with more time and institutions could have yielded richer data and allowed for more observation and document analysis. Also the inclusion of more time and institutions would have added to the variety of those apart of this study.

The final limitation was the inability of the researcher to connect with a variety of BCC Directors and staff members. Prior to selecting the two institutions for this study, several BCCs were contacted for their participation. Unfortunately, and more common than expected, most BCC staff members did not respond. Although these individuals

received a study information sheet along with the approved dissertation proposal, they still opted to refrain from participating. This is ironic considering that the centers that were contacted were all identified as exemplary centers. There could have been a number of hidden reasons for their unwillingness to participate, such as negative research findings or various university politics that would have inhibited their participation. Due to the nature of this study and the lack of foundational research, the apprehension of some BCCs to participate was understandable and enlightening.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of the present study, operational definitions for several concepts are needed, these include:

African American/Black: These are terms used interchangeably to identify Americans of African descent, particularly of Black African descent.

BCC: This is an acronym for Black Cultural Center. While some are also called African American Culture Centers, BCC will be utilized to represent all centers that focus on Black or African American culture and history.

PWI: This is an acronym for predominantly White institutions.

Institutionalization: Describes the process and evidence markers by which a new organizational entity becomes an autonomous and formally recognized stable unit in a larger organization. The process and evidence markers will be outlined in Chapter 3.

Exemplary BCC: A BCC identified by the Association of Black Cultural Center's (ABCC) Board of Trustees, as having an exemplary reputational status that have been

identified by the evidence markers list. (refer to the Evidence Marker Criteria Check list on page 176)

### **Organization of Dissertation**

Chapter Two will provide a critical review of literature and research pertaining to BCCs' history and function, as well as the current context of challenges and threats to these centers in higher education. Chapter Two will also provide an overview of the conceptual framework on Institutionalization. Chapter Three describes the methods used to collect and analyze data. Chapter Four presents an in depth discussion of the BCC at University I. Chapter Five offers an in-depth discussion of the BCC University II. Chapter 6 discusses the study's major findings in relation to RQ1 and the findings from the cross analysis that answers RQ2. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes the study, the findings and presents general conclusions and recommendations for future studies.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on Black Culture Centers can be classified into three major categories: historical essays on the evolution of BCCs in higher education, commentary information about the role and function of BCCs in the lives of students, and anecdotal writings and commentary on the challenges, threats, and developmental paths of BCCs. This chapter will first review information about the history of BCCs in American higher education, with a particular focus on the establishment of BCCs at PWIs post 1960s. Next, will be a focus on the role and function of BCCs past and present. Then, literature about the challenges, threats, and developmental paths that BCCs face will be presented. Next, I summarize the polemics of the debate about the relevance and challenges of BCCs in contemporary higher education. The final section provides an overview of the conceptual framework that will help guide the present study on exemplary BCCs.

#### **The Evolution of BCCs in Higher Education**

*“African American students are often ridiculed for what has been empirically proven to be normal. They are persecuted for seeking the companionship of those who are most like them on campus.”*

Sybril Bennett, 1998, p. 129-130

Beginning with Black student activism and demands for supportive institutional climates, BCCs have existed on college campuses since the mid to late 1960s (Hefner,



2002; Patton, 2006; Stovall, 2006). To date, there is no consistent published documentation of the first BCC establishment nationally. Young (1991) stated that the earliest can be traced to the mid 1960s to early 1970s, and several of these still exist today: The Institute of Black Culture at the University of Florida in 1972; The Paul Robeson Cultural Center at Penn State University, J. D. O'Bryant African American Institute at Northeastern University in 1969, and The Nyumburu House at the University of Maryland-College Park in 1971 (Patton, 2010). Nevertheless, the consensus in the literature points to the Black Student Protest period, starting in the mid 1960's, as the beginning of BCCs at PWIs.

The overall Civil Rights Movement which spawned student unrest in the 1960s generated greater efforts to enroll Black students in White institutions (Fleming, 1981). This movement, accompanied by resistance, violence, and a desire for change, represents the essence of the African American student struggle for equal opportunity in higher education. Additionally, other scholars believe that the precursor to establishing BCCs began in the early 1900's when a very limited number of African American students were allowed to attend PWIs (Hord, 2006; Thelin, 2004). Mingle (1981) reported that Black student enrollment leaped from 3,000 to 98,000 in the 1960's at southern PWIs, while Black students increasingly represented 8.4% of the total college population by the end of the decade in the country, which was the highest it had ever been. This was due in part to the increase of Black students at Southern PWIs. As more African American students enrolled in PWIs, these institutions struggled to serve the needs of this new population.

It was during these times that Black students on many campuses were facing racism and were challenging their administrations to provide protection of their student rights (Williamson, 2003). Black students began to search for other sources on campus to counteract their experiences with racism and marginalization such as unempathetic faculty/ staff or student involvement opportunities...often to no avail (Young, 1986). According to Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, Tuttle, Ward, and Gaston-Gayles (2004), "Black students were barely tolerated on many campuses, and felt the sting of racism in class where they were simultaneously invisible and a spectacle. ... life was not structured to recognize and accommodate [their] needs and desires" (p. v). This national trend eventually led to campus protests across the nation that pressured administrations to provide more support for Black students, such as African Studies Programs and "safe spaces" on campus. It has been said that Black students asserted "Black power" as their foundation to fight for "space and place" at PWIs (Thomas, 1981). In affirmation, Hefner (2002) also asserted that Black culture centers were established and, in some cases demanded by students, to serve as a safe haven for students during times of social and political protests.

Most of the historical accounts in the literature that connect Black student protests to the emergence of BCCs conclude that Black students began conducting sit ins and protests across the nation around 1968, and typically fought for the following educational demands: (a) The establishment of Afro-American studies programs, (b) Increased Black enrollment at PWIs, (c) Recruitment of students from the Black

community, and (d) Recruitment of a representative percentage of Black faculty. In 2005, Patton noted:

Black students' demands for BCCs were inextricably intertwined with the yearning to see Black culture manifested throughout the entire system of higher education. In essence they wanted to see their culture recognized in Academics (curriculum and faculty), social life (student activities, residential life), and administrative affairs (financial aid, admissions). (p. 157)

While Black students were protesting in the late 1960s and 1970s, college presidents and chief administrators of universities responded to the issues of Black students by creating Offices of Minority Affairs or "Black Houses" (Harper, 1975). In fact, by the mid 1970s colleges and universities across the nation eventually began designating houses, buildings, or certain spaces on campus for Black students to meet their need for community and social development (Patton, 2005). Hord (2006) referred to them as "fortresses" or "Black Houses" where students could go to counter the daily resistance from their White counterparts on campus.

For instance, at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, student protests began in the late 1960s led by the Afro-American Student Liberation Force (AASLF), which was the only organization that assisted African-American students on the campus. Because of the hostile climate that Black students experienced, the AASLF constitution stated that its purpose was to enable the Black students with pride and self-esteem to partake of the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship (<http://omsa.utk.edu> , 2010). It was ultimately the organization's desire to provide for the cultural, educational, and

political needs of African-American students on campus, since it was lacking. Thus, several student protests, demonstrations, and negotiations with university administration ensued before the Black Cultural Center at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville was established in August of 1975 (<http://omsa.utk.edu>, 2010).

In another example, Patton (2005) discusses the influence of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) implementation of the Mississippi Freedom Summer as a precursor to the Afro-centric philosophy base of Black student protests at PWIs. The Mississippi Freedom Summer was an organized effort launched in June of 1964 and designed to recruit northern White students to the South to organize and educate Blacks and Whites about voting. The ultimate goal was to register more African Americans to vote in the state of Mississippi. Although the plan seemed quite strategic, many of the members of SNCC began to question the motives and sincerity of White people who assisted with the movement, particularly concerning their middle class backgrounds, missionary attitudes, superior education, as well as the media interest they attracted (Fairclough, 2001). This conflict eventually led to the demise of the Freedom Summer. Nevertheless, SNCC was the precursor to many Black Student Protests on college campuses. Rojas (1981) asserted: "The close of Freedom summer stimulated a growing interest in human rights, and within the ivy walls of American colleges and universities the democratic pulse beat with a passion and verve never before witnessed" (p. 2). Additionally, Young (1991) stated that, "Black Cultural Centers were...safe havens in an alien environment...and viewed as a necessary and just alternative to this environment" (p. 18). Thus, BCCs were preceded by the demands for

Black Studies. Hefner (2002) put it best by stating, “Black cultural centers are the fruits of Civil Rights and Black Nationalist Movements. Their counterparts are Black Studies departments” (p. 223).

Most of the literature on the emergence of BCCs discusses them from a historical, anecdotal, or commentary perspective originating from the Black Power movement that motivated Black student protests (Exum, 1985; Fleming, 1981; Hefner, 2002; Hord, 2006; Pittman, 1994; Princes, 1994). It is clear that historical literature provides a significant foundation on how BCCs were started at PWIs from the Afro-centric based student protest movements and served as “homes away home” for many Black students who felt out of place on their campuses. However, the literature fails to connect the reader to the developmental phases of those same centers, after their establishment. Did they expand? Did they remain the same? What became of them and how? Further, the literature provides no explanation for how these centers were placed at various levels of function and value on many campuses. More importantly, there isn’t a clarification on whether or not the early BCCs were initially instituted as permanent entities or simply quick fixes of appeasement. Not only have scholars discussed the historical emergence of BCCs, some have focused on their function.

### **Role and Function of BCCs: Past and Present**

A review of literature from various historical and commentary writings from scholars in the field of higher education (Bankhole, 2006; Young & Hannon, 2002; Princes, 2006) and writers in the Association of Black Culture Centers (ABCCs), clearly suggested that BCCs were mainly designed to help African American students at PWIs

cope with alienation and loneliness in chilly campus environments to assist with the development of students' racial, ethnic, and cultural pride. Stewart (2006) advanced this concept when he proposed that in the early years, BCCs were hubs for Black students to refine their political consciousness on a local, national, and international level through the campus engagement of political activists and cultural performers.

### **Role and Function of BCCs: Past**

In some explanations, BCCs were described as bridges designed to help the transition of Black students into mainstream college life from a lens of ethnic identity and consciousness (Young, 1991). These centers spawned a new safe haven for students to affirm their identity and to begin creating an environment where they fit on the campus. In these "Black Houses," students were able to discuss their experiences, to find fellowship with other Black students, to promote awareness of Black culture, and to feel a sense of inclusion (Hord, 2006). BCCs were eventually identified as major recruitment and retention tools for all students, especially students of color. This was done through initial programs, services, and activities that raised the level of dialogue on cultural competence on campus and contributed to the diversity of PWIs.

Foote (2006) examined the role of three BCCs at relatively small, selective, private PWIs, from their inception in the late 1960s to the present. Using a qualitative interview design, she specifically examined how black student cohesion, the political and racial climate of the country and around campus, and Black students' feelings of comfort on campus affected Black students' relationship with their respective BCCs at three different historical periods of time. She interviewed a sample of twelve Black alumni

and six current Blacks who were actively participating in three BCCs: the late 1960's when BCCs were formed, the early 1980s, and the present. Using open-ended questions focusing on BCC function and purpose, history of BCC, and participants' extent of involvement at the BCC, her findings indicated that BCCs served and continue to serve as spaces where Black students cope with hostility on unfriendly and indifferent campus environments, particularly in the periods of the 1960s and 1980s.

Related to function and operation, Foote (2006) also found that student involvement began to decrease due to perceptions of the location, access, and lack of visibility of the BCCs; that is, the centers were often located at the edge or outer margin of campus. This notion of BCCs being at the edge of campus was embraced by Black students particularly in the 1960s and 1980s. They initially appreciated having any space to call their own even if it was inaccessible from the mainstream campus because it served as a safe haven from hostility. However, as time progressed, students felt they were cheated by a minimal space that was at the edge of campus. This made them feel even more disconnected from campus, and the low visibility of the centers discouraged student usage. When space and place are significant in institutionalizing organizations (Kezar, 2007), this conundrum of limited and inaccessible space of many BCCs ultimately raises questions of stability and permanency of the center.

Other significant findings of Foote's (2006) study suggested that BCCs have evolved into entities that encourage positive dialogue between races and promote cultural understanding and many of those interviewed felt that their BCC could benefit from expansion and further development. While Foote's (2006) study begins looking at

the functions of BCCs from a longitudinal perspective, it fails to focus on non-participants of the BCC and why they don't participate. The study also seems incomplete, as it failed to utilize a more formalized approach to the data collection and analysis. It seems to only have been from a few gathered interviews done at the last minute.

The research literature that concentrates on the role and function of BCCs in the past is quite limited. We know they historically served as Afro-centric foundations and safe havens for Black Students at PWIs. However, the literature fails to provide significant research on how these same centers historically impacted the students. Most of what is known about role and function in the past is found in the historical and anecdotal accounts on their emergence.

### **Role and Function of BCCs: Present**

Most knowledge on BCCs stems from commentary accounts (e.g. Hord, 2006), conference papers (e.g., Princes, 1994 & 2006), or historical writings about their development (Hord, 2006). Some authors focus on BCCs and their function today (e.g., Foote, 2006; Hord, 2006; Patton, 2004, 2005, 2006). Although BCCs evolved from the Civil Rights Movement and Black student protests, their role and functions have been evolving. The commentary literature does highlight that the functions of BCCs were eventually expanded and the contemporary function of BCCs at PWIs began to change and grow (Bankhole, 2006; Hefner, 2002; Hord, 2006; Pittman, 1994; Princes, 1994; Young, 1986). Several BCCs have been expanded and given more responsibility and resources by their institutions, and are clearly not feeling a threat to their identity or



future. The Association of Black Culture Centers (ABCC) has implicitly identified these BCCs as having an exemplary reputational status. However, there is no literature that clearly explores what factors shaped the expansion of those exemplary centers and to what extent. There has been some recent empirical work on BCCs at PWIs from Lori Patton (2006), including a smaller unpublished study (Bankhole, 2006) that explores the purpose, place, role, and function of BCCs. These studies will be explored more specifically in this writing. There is also very small but growing literature in the form of essays, commentaries, and historical accounts of the impact and effectiveness of BCCs at PWIs (Hord, 1993, 2006; Princes, 2006). However, there remains a dearth in the literature that focuses on the exemplary BCC and the factors that shaped its place on campus.)

While Bennett (1971) discussed general criteria for determining the potential of BCCs in meeting the needs of the Black community, Pittman (1994) qualitatively commented that BCCs have a profound impact on Black student retention by facilitating the identity development process, enhancing the campus climate for Black students, and offering academic and social support opportunities. Stewart, Russell, and Wright (1997) further maintained that many BCCs house Black student organizations and Black student programming to provide Black students at PWIs with the needed support and opportunities to interact socially with students similar to themselves. To gain campus perceptions of the Black Cultural Center at Indiana University, Princes (2006) administered a preliminary survey to 113 participants (96 students and 17 staff) at Indiana University. She found that a majority of the respondents suggested support

for the BCC and urged its continuation and presence on campus due to its resources and the cultural opportunities it provided to students through leadership and involvement opportunities ranging from mentoring groups to cultural programming boards. This informal survey assessment by Princes (2006) seemed useful in validating the BCC, but lack breadth and depth in its presentation. Specificity on sample selection, purpose, and even data analysis were not clearly explained. Overall, while Princes's findings, along with other historical/commentary writings show a profound support for the continuation and rationale for BCCs, they still represent a significant gap in the empirical literature that focus on their stability and persistence at PWIs.

In an unpublished essay designed to highlight the role and function of BCCs, Bankhole (2006) implemented a document analysis and focus group of BCC directors in 1998. In her document analysis, she reviewed brochures, newsletters, and websites of over 20 BCCs (e.g., Austin Peay State University, Kent State University, North Carolina State University) across the nation. She found that whether BCCs are housed in Student Affairs or Academic Affairs, they continue to serve a multitude of functions in contemporary times through programs and services of unique cultural quality. She found also that BCCs serve a necessary purpose by providing vital student program services, as well as academic advising, tutoring, mentoring, leadership development, and professional skill building. She reported that BCCs have developed into major tools for recruitment and retention of all students and concluded that they should be supported and expanded. Once again, this essay seemed incomplete in some areas as to provide details to how the data was collected in analyzed.

In a video lecture on centering Black culture, Na'im Akbar (1993) also explained four contemporary functions of a Black Culture Center:

- (1) The culture center must contribute to identity development and validation.
- (2) The center must provide programs and services that encourage the broader university community to increase its knowledge of ethnic identity.
- (3) The culture center must be student-centered and serve as an advocate for students
- (4) The culture center, through programs and services, must bridge the gap between disciplines and administrative areas by encouraging collaboration

However, Akbar along with the previous unpublished essay, focused on the continual evolution, expansions, or changes in BCCs.

Lori Patton's (2004, 2005, 2006) research, stemming mostly from her dissertation, is the most notable scholar on the topic of BCCs present role and function. She conducted a study of student perceptions from participants at BCCs at PWIs. She used phenomenological and case study designs at three different BCCs: The University of Florida, Northern Illinois University, and Wabash College. The purpose of her study was to understand how Black students made meaning of the BCC on their campus. She completed a total of 31 interviews of students at the three different schools to understand how undergraduate Black students experience the BCC in relation to their experiences at a PWI. She also used document review and observations for the study and found that the BCCs served as a "springboard" for several things: teaching students how to be involved on campus, helping students become acclimated to the campus,

giving them opportunities to learn leadership values through student involvement in programming, providing opportunities to share and cultivate historical pride, helping them to develop a strong sense of cultural identity, and affirming their place on campus.

Patton's work suggested that BCCs have served Black students in several capacities. These include: (a) Offering space for students to interact and learn about their culture, support services, and historical presence; (b) Being safe havens for Black students to cope with isolation and alienation at PWIs; (c) Helping Black students adjust to campus through programming and student involvement; (d) Providing cultural identity for Blacks students by providing resources where they learn about their culture (e) Providing recruitment tools for more Black students; and (f) Serving as a home away from home for Black students at PWIs (Patton, 2004; 2006; 2007).

Patton also found that in the BCCs Black students connected with a communal energy at BCCs that they didn't feel anywhere on campus, including university student centers. Students reported being ignored or excluded when they participated in many of the mainstream campus activities that are housed in the student center/university center. These concerns ranged from the lack of interest in diverse programming, to cultural insensitivity of many student leaders. For example, student perceptions of covert racism present on campus were significant, particularly with Homecoming festivities, which are typically housed out of the student center. Students reported hidden forms of racism surrounding the second crowning of an African American woman at the University of Florida, 30 years after the first Black Homecoming queen

had been crowned (Patton, 2006). Additionally, she found that students also felt a sense of connection in BCCs because of the lack of cultural awareness in other mainstream campus activities, such as orientation and welcome week. Information such as ethnic hair care products, foods, businesses, places of worship and other needed resources that are culture-specific, can be shared during Black student orientations, thus once again exuding that unique sense of community (Patton, 2006). It is also at these centers where students learn about history of the center, the presence of African Americans on campus, and the history of African people in the global Diaspora. Students also learn how to establish networks, identify which courses and instructors were best, establish friendships, and ultimately create that sense of community. So while university student centers were available, the students gravitated towards the BCC where they felt they would not be excluded and felt a sense of community and inclusion.

Using Critical Race Theory as her theoretical framework, Patton (2006) provided clear examples of how students connected with that communal energy when engaging the BCC. One interview revealed, “ It’s like a family here...we treat each other like brother and sister...like in the beginning, I didn’t know these people, and now they’re like my family ” (p. 5). As students continued to seek out various safe spaces on campus, the BCC became one of those frequented spaces because of the communal energy that students connect with upon entering the building. Consequently, the BCC became the conduit for providing academic, social, relational, and spiritual support for the student. Students report it being the most comfortable environment where they feel a sense of kinship (Patton, 2006). Students also often described the staff as a family

referencing “mother-like” or father-like figures who mentored them by challenging and supporting them (Patton, 2006). She found that the sense of community in BCCs centered upon several characteristics: a sense of belonging, an atmosphere of kinship, and family environment. However, the programs and services within the BCC were what gave the contemporary student the additional support they needed.

When looking at leadership development, Patton (2004, 2006, 2008) found that student participation at the BCC was the reason for many students becoming involved in other campus activities, thus impacting their social and relational growth. Students reported that had they not initially been involved at the BCC their involvement in other campus activities would have been substantially diminished. Specifically, their participation as first-year students allowed for opportunities to hone various personal and professional skills, which include: public speaking, interpersonal skills, event planning & promotion, small group interfacing, and teamwork. These opportunities for involvement ranged from working in the center as a work-study assistant, serving as an ambassador for the office, or participating in mentoring programs. Students also reported that participation in these activities also increased self-assurance and confidence, which led to their involvement into mainstream activities, including the all-campus homecoming planning committees, student government, and campus wide ambassador groups. While trailblazing the small body of literature on BCCs, her research only used one lens to analyze BCCs...the students and their perceptions. Future research should explore what characteristics are necessary for a successful BCC

to persist at a PWI? As noted earlier, there is a gap in the literature that focuses on what factors create an exemplary BCC.

In summary, the literature, mostly commentary and historical, outlines contemporary functions similar to some of those at the inception of BCCs: recruitment and retention of Black students, space for those students to associate with each other, helping students adjust to college life, outlet for social support, and safe havens where students can remove themselves from sometimes harsh reality of being a minority student on predominantly White and sometimes racist campus climate (Bankhole, 2006; Foote, 2006; Hefner, 2002; Hord, 1993; Johnson, 1991; Patton, 2006; Prince, 1994; Stewart, 2006; Young, 1986;). While BCCs also continue to serve additional functions of assisting Blacks students by providing academic and social support, managing daily frustrations, creating positive self and group identities, fostering intellectual growth (Patton, 2006), and increasing involvement in campus life, (Hord, 1993; Stovall, 2006) the research on BCCs remains highly limited and nearly non-existent, with the exception of one informal study presented in the form of a paper (Foote, 2006) and one scholar who expanded her dissertation which focused on BCCs and student perceptions (Patton, 2004, 2005, 2006).

### **BCCs: Challenges, Threats, and Developmental Paths**

Despite their contribution to campus life for students, especially African Americans at PWIs, BCCs face significant challenges, threats, and developmental paths as it relates to their existence. From being labeled “pacifiers,” “temporary bridges,” or “misguided concessions to Black demands by weak-kneed pseudo-liberals,” the

existence of Black Cultural Centers has invoked a multitude of criticisms, challenges, and even threats (Princes, 1994). Various criticisms and misconceptions about BCCs abound. Patton (2006) identified these as: a). BCCs foster separatism and self-segregation; b). BCCs are only for Black students; and c). BCCs serve only a social mission. However, she responded to these misconceptions by advocating that BCCs are “still central to student learning” because of the communal support and familial atmosphere that helps students successfully navigate the campus environment and overcome daily difficulties of being a minority student at a PWI.

Stewart (2006) discussed the challenges of BCCs, a major one being the contemporary generation of students and the need for BCCs to embrace progressive trends in Black popular culture, via information technology and building student appreciation and participation. As Black student needs change, so must BCCs. The commentary literature highlights other major challenges that include: the BCCs’ ability to recognize and adequately support the ever-changing needs of students, faculty, community, and the university; shrinking campus budgets that reduce the resources devoted to units such as BCCs; and increasing diversity in American higher education that brings new and different students to campus who need their “own” culturally relevant resources (Pittman, 1994; Princes, 1994). For example, the MCC at Texas A&M University was originally a Black Cultural Center. As the campus student demographic began to shift and more Latino students began enrolling in the 1980s, the university decided to shift to a Multi-cultural Center (personal communication, 2011, Theresa Cooper). Young (2002) also pointed out that other challenges include diminished



autonomy, higher levels of scrutiny, and decentralized locations affecting student participation (Princes, 1994).

Some scholars (Brown et al, 2007) believe that multicultural centers are most appropriate for meeting the needs of all racial/ethnic minorities including African Americans, while others warn against multicultural centers being established mainly at the expense of BCCs (Hefner, 2002; Hord, 2006). This debate speaks to one of the threats to BCCs. Hefner refers to BCCs as being “under attack” and “standing on shaky ground” due to several factors including “good old-fashioned competition”, particularly from Multicultural Centers (MCCs). The overall threat, as Hefner (2002) suggested, is that “Black centers either will be pushed to compromise their African-centered foundations in order to appeal to other ethnic groups or...drop the “Black” title all together and become “Multicultural” centers” (p. 1).

While many directors of BCCs struggle to protect the existence of their centers in the face of pressure to become multicultural, some have accepted transitioning from Black to multicultural to maintain some level of African American culture, as opposed to having no African American presence on campus at all. Young (1986) emphasized that centers which survived took on additional roles such as promoting leadership development of Black students, served as a crossroads for all ethnicities to exchange points of view on neutral ground, and moved from a mere service orientation to an educational orientation. The literature that discusses the challenges, threats, and criticisms of BCCs highlights the threat to their existence due to political campus environments, increasingly diverse student groups at PWIs wanting more resources for

themselves, and uncertain paths of existence, but provides no solutions to how to maintain the centers in lieu of the threats.

In the face of these challenges, BCCs (San Francisco State) have either been terminated completely (Anderson, 1990), converted to MCCs (Texas A&M University), or persisted and expanded (The Ohio State). On one hand, Princes (1994) explained how many BCCs fold, while Young and Hannon (2002) even discussed the “staying power of BCCs,” referring to the resilience of some BCCs, the exemplary BCCs. Some campuses have constructed or remodeled multi-million dollar facilities, such as Purdue University, The Ohio State, Indiana University, Miami University, and Pennsylvania State, which have all been identified as exemplary BCCs by the ABCC Board of Trustees. However, these are not the norm for many BCCs at PWIs (personal communication, 2011, Fred Hord). One question this raises is why some BCCs close down, change, or become exemplary? More importantly, it is critical to ask what accounts for the exemplary group thriving? One possible explanation is that these institutions have become integral and vital to the institution’s campus life.

All in all, the literature on BCCs does a decent job in identifying the evolution of BCCs mission and role, stemming from the Black Student protests, and how they functioned and supported students. The literature also discusses the present-day functions of Black Cultural Centers and how those functions are changing due to several challenges and threats that many centers face. Another major threat to BCCs is the empirical literature gap in what we truly know about their existence and how they operate, especially the exemplary BCC. Since empirical evidence through assessment

and reporting is one source that is commonly used to validate campus units and their relevance in higher education, more is needed for exemplary BCCs. Since the mid 1990s and early 2000s there have only been a handful of studies on BCCs (e.g., Bankhole, 2006; Foote, 2006, & Patton, 2006, 2007) and once again, this underscores the need to learn more about these known, yet unknown entities once called “Black houses”.

### **Institutionalization as Theoretical Framework**

Merriam (1998) concluded that theoretical frameworks derive from “concepts, terms, definitions, models, and theories of a particular literature base and disciplinary orientation” (p. 46), and she argued that every research study should have a theoretical framework. While theoretical frameworks can conceal certain aspects, they can allow the researcher to examine other specific aspects of a phenomenon (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Anfara and Mertz defined theoretical frameworks as, “any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels, that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena” (p. xxvii), and it is with this definition that I apply the theoretical framework of Institutionalization to this study, as it may lend a substantial understanding to the path of exemplary BCCs. This section will examine the literature on Institutionalization from several perspectives:

Institutionalization as a process, Institutionalization as a property variable, and as it relates to evidence markers for exemplary BCCs.

A review of the literature produced several definitions of Institutionalization. Clark (1968) defined Institutionalization in broad terms as the process whereby specific cultural elements or cultural objects are adopted into a social system, therefore

integrating them into formal organizations. Goodman and Bazerman (1979) addressed Institutionalization as a process whereby new norms, values, and structures become incorporated within the framework of existing patterns of norms, values, and structures. Kramer (2000) also explained that to “institutionalize something means to establish a standard practice or custom within a human system...based on the assumption that institutions, whether they be social, educational, or political, have predictable attributes that people can expect to be true year after year. Institutions are the vessels that define the behaviors within them, and as such, they organize their internal systems so that these qualities can be sustained in a routine way” (p. 14).

Berger and Luckman (1967) drew on the philosophical tradition of phenomenology when they defined Institutionalization as a core process in the creation and perpetuation of enduring social groups and situations. They asserted that institutions represent the end state of something being institutionalized and that it is “incipient in continuing social situations that continue in time” (p. 53). They go on to say that Institutionalization is typified from habitualized acts within organizations in response to solve recurring problems. By and large the literature concentrates on Institutionalization as the integration of structures, institutions, or practices into a system through an ongoing process. Kramer (2000) summarized that the following characteristics are typically associated with an institutionalized practice: routine, widespread, legitimized, expected, supported, permanent, and resilient. However, before a practice is institutionalized, it moves through phases that appear to have some predictable elements.

The literature (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Goodman et al., 1979; Kezar, 2007, Kramer, 2000; Zucker, 1977) often describes three phases of Institutionalization but uses different terms for them:

- critical mass building, quality building, sustains Institutionalization
- beginning work, emerging work, systemic work (Goodman et al., 1979)
- exploring, transitioning, transforming (Kramer, 2000)
- capacity building, widespread use and support, systemic integration

Regardless of terminology, the literature focuses on Institutionalization as a process utilizing three phases or stages (Kramer, 2000). In the literature there are several models that deserve mention.

One recent model is Kezar's (2007), which is the only work on Institutionalization related to higher education. Kezar defined Institutionalization as, "establishing a standard practice or custom in a human system" (p. 415). She used the concept of Institutionalization to understand the relationship between college presidents' leadership strategies and phases of institutionalizing a diversity initiative by engaging in "elite interviews" with 27 college presidents. Kezar maintained that before a practice or custom is institutionalized it must move through three predictable phases: mobilization, implementation, and Institutionalization.

Mobilization (Phase 1) is a process that begins by focusing on the structural level and concentrating on introducing and establishing concrete ways that the practice or

change is represented in the organizational structure. This phase focuses on the structural realm and involves becoming aware of a change or innovation, investigating and understanding the change, creating support systems, and making some attempts to perform the behavior. For example, as Kezar (2007) explained in this phase, institutions often have no diversity agenda and few conversations about diversity are occurring. Discussions about diversity have often been considered difficult, conflictual, and related to a racial incident on campus. Any diversity efforts underway were compartmentalized and marginalized to a particular unit. Lastly, there were few interventions specifically designed to support students of color and create an inclusive environment.

Implementation (Phase 2) is most often focused on the procedural or behavioral level. In this phase, various processes and structures are put in place to support the new practice or change, people begin to have a preference for the new behavior or practice, and the policy and behaviors become standard and apart of the standard operating procedure. In this phase, institutions have a diversity agenda and on-going conversations related to race, gender, social class, and other aspects of diversity. The campuses have a clear rhetoric related to diversity and supporters committed to diversity; and are even beginning to describe the importance of moving from rhetoric to action. These campuses have various intervention programs that are less compartmentalized than those in Phase 1. While they are usually not working in a unified effort, leaders and intervention programs across campus are loosely coordinated. This phase also encompasses more references to retention and success.

Finally, Institutionalization (Phase 3) is referred to as the cultural level because it requires the organization to accept the values and norms associated with the new innovation and incorporate them into the culture; there is normative consensus about those values and norms. In this phase, Kezar (2007) observed that there is less rhetoric or conversation on the topic because it is institutionalized in campus-wide practices. They institution emphasizes diversity less in their printed materials and on their websites than campuses in the second phase, and has regular monitoring mechanisms to keep track of its diversity efforts and ensure progress is being made. These campuses use data and monitoring practices on a regular basis and are very aware of their annual progress towards diversity. Campus climate surveys are conducted to find ways to keep in touch with the pulse of the campus, and the focus is more on outcomes and success rather than access and retention. They describe diversity in complex ways, looking at the overlap of gender, race, and social class, in addition to looking at racial subgroups. They also focus more on specific populations- for instance, not reflecting on the success of the overall "Hispanic" student population, but on the success of "Mexicans," "Puerto Ricans," and other subgroups. These characteristics represent a diversity agenda that is institutionalized.

Overall, Kezar proposed that over the course of these three phases, capacity is built, support cultivated, and systemic integration facilitated. Kezar's definition of Institutionalization does a formidable job of highlighting the process of

Institutionalization for a diversity initiative in higher education, but it still doesn't provide concrete explanations that explain tangible markers for Institutionalization.

Zucker's (1977) concept of Institutionalization as both a process and a property variable is the second model of Institutionalization that the literature highlights. This conceptual framework will be used for this study. Drawing on Berger's and Luckmann's definition of Institutionalization which focuses on habitualized acts within systems, Zucker and Tolbert (1999) state that it happens at varying levels through a set of sequential processes. Habitualization (Phase 1) is the development of new structural arrangements in response to a specific organizational problem or set of problems. Also classified as the pre-Institutionalization stage, this is where an organization responds with formalized new structures or changes to those problems, but they tend to be relatively temporary, often lasting until only for the length of leadership's tenure. Objectification (Phase 2) moves towards a more permanent and widespread status. It involves the development of some degree of social consensus among organizational decision-makers concerning the value of a new structure and increases that needed change based on that consensus. New structures in this phase have become fairly widely diffused and are described as being at the stage of semi-Institutionalization because adopters are still uncertain about consistent evidence of the quality of the new structure. Sedimentation (Phase 3) involves full Institutionalization because it includes complete diffusion of new structures across the group and has historical continuity over a lengthy period of time. It is evidenced by the combined effects of relatively low



resistance by opposing groups, continued cultural support, promotion by advocacy groups, and positive correlations with desired outcomes.

How do we know that an exemplary BCC is institutionalized? What are the evidence markers? Zucker along with Berger and Luckman (1967) suggested an additional aspect of Institutionalization related to property variable (evidence markers). They term it “exteriority.” This refers to the “degree to which typifications are experienced as possessing a reality of their own...as an external and coercive fact” (p. 58). In this study, the concept exteriority within Institutionalization may be used to represent the evidence markers for exemplary BCCs.

Some evidence markers that are used to identify exemplary BCCs at PWIs have been identified by a panel of experts of the Board of Trustees of the Association of Black Cultural Centers (ABCC). They represent a professional agreement about the following criteria, which typically represent an exemplary center. These are evidence markers that they have deemed characteristic of exemplary BCCs, which in turn may be institutionalized. In this study, these markers will be used to compare/contrast the data from the comparative analysis of the two exemplary BCCs being studied. (Hord, 2006; Zucker, 1977). According to the ABCC Board of Trustees panel of experts, a BCC can be considered exemplary if it meets the following:

1. Is a member of and actively attends the national conference of the Association of Black Culture Centers (ABCC) or a national association related to diversity awareness and issues in higher education

2. Has significant historical beginnings on its campus stemming from the Black Student Movement (this signifies longevity in the field)
3. Occupies a free-standing facility or boasts a significant amount of square footage
4. Has a formally appointed executive or director with a substantial support staff
5. Maintains a formal operating budget over an extended period of time within the university's budget unit
6. Creates and submits strategic plans that align with regional or national accreditation standards (i.e., SACSA)
7. Submits regular annual reports that provide data for evaluation
8. Provides programmatic resources and services to the university campus
9. Has a visible and accessible location on campus
10. The director of the center has a formally recognizable position on the organizational chart
11. The executive of the center has a formalized reporting relationship with mid to senior level administrator on the student affairs or academic side
12. Has a director that is knowledgeable of the history and impact of BCCs and advocates for the center's stability
13. Has the support of the institution's upper level administration who advocate for the center's continued existence

#### 14. Uses ongoing technology to communicate with the Association and other BCCs

These summarized criteria were collected and identified through Fred Hord and the Board of Trustees of ABCC which consists of a panel of experts, administrators, scholars, and experts in the field of Black Cultural Centers. Along with the theoretical framework, these criteria will be utilized to identify the sample institutions for this study and will be applied to compare and contrast the data from each case in this study. It is also important to note that while one might expect an exemplary BCC to possess the markers of Institutionalization, they are not a fail-safe guarantee to being institutionalized, particularly in lieu of the precarious fiscal climate that most universities are experiencing. This framework simply serves as a lens to understand the development of exemplary BCCs. It is not a panacea.

Scholars who study BCCs tend to focus on their history, their espoused purpose and mission, and recently their impact on college student learning and development (Hord, 2006; Princes, 2006; Patton, 2007). No study, to date, focuses on exemplary BCCs at PWIs, which is the focus on the present study. Thus, the purpose of this study is to discern what factors mark the development of exemplary BCCs at two Predominantly White research institutions.

#### **Summary**

In this chapter, the literature on BCCs was reviewed. Ultimately, the literature shows a paucity of research on what factors associate with the exemplary status of Black Cultural Center at a Predominantly White Institution. First, I covered evolution of BCCs

in higher education stemming from the Black student protest movement. Then I examined the role and function of BCCs past and present. Next, I discussed the challenges, threats, and developmental paths of BCCs. Lastly I examined the literature on the conceptual framework of Institutionalization focusing on the processes of Institutionalization and the evidence markers of Institutionalization. The next chapter describes the methods and procedures used in the conduct of the study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHOD & DESIGN**

This chapter provides a description of the design and the methods for this study. The purpose of this study is to discern the factors that characterize exemplary BCCs at two Predominantly White institutions. Using a multi-site case study approach, this study specifically seeks to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the factors are associated with being an exemplary BCC?
- (2) What are the common factors associated with being an exemplary BCC across institutions?
- (3) How does Institutionalization relate as a common factor to exemplary BCCs?

The chapter will begin with an overview of qualitative inquiry and the methodology of case study design, with a rationale for why it will be utilized for the study.

Additionally, information regarding the role of the researcher/issues related to bias, sites and sample, data collection strategies, data analysis strategies, and methods for ensuring the trustworthiness of the analysis [validity issues] are discussed.

#### **Design and Rationale**

There are a variety of research designs available, but the research focus for this study lended itself to a qualitative case study design that employs a within analysis for each case and a cross analysis for the two cases. While qualitative inquiry is not entirely unconcerned with outcomes, the main purpose is to understand the process by which

events and actions take place (Merriam, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described qualitative research as:

...studying things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them...involves the studies use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives. (p. 2)

Merriam (1998) more clearly defined case study as an “umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5). Thus, the ultimate goal of qualitative inquiry, as it relates to this study, is to truly grasp how these exemplary BCCs are developed and stabilized in their natural and active campus environments. I am specifically interested in examining the events and processes that lead to BCCs becoming exemplary units of operation at PWIs, and I am employing a qualitative approach because it aims to analyze the meaning that is attached to certain experiences or processes. This approach to qualitative research is relevant to this study because what is known about how BCCs at PWIs are made exemplary entities remains a mystery.

Baxter and Jack (2008) suggested that multiple or collective case studies allow the researcher to analyze within each setting and across settings. This study employed a multi-site case study approach using a within and cross analysis (Yin, 2003) to

investigate two exemplary Black Cultural Centers. From an emic perspective, this will develop a better understanding of how exemplary BCCs exist from two different PWIs. The case study approach will be utilized to examine the central processes that assisted with the centers becoming a mainstay or permanent and exemplary entity on the campus. The research in this study seeks to address factors that shaped the exemplary status of each center through the lens of the administration, staff, policies and processes, events, students and the center itself, which focuses on all actors who play a significant role in the creation and integration of BCCs.

A case study approach is appropriate for this study because it is ideal for discovery or revelatory cases (Yin, 1994) where an observer may have access to a phenomenon that was previously inaccessible, as in this case... the BCC at PWIs. Case studies also may be used to confirm or challenge a theory, or to represent a unique or extreme case (Yin, 2003). The information on exemplary BCCs has been quite limited. Thus a case study approach will allow for unveiling information relating to exemplary BCCs which are extreme cases in the association of Black Cultural Centers.

A case study allows for obtaining in-depth, detailed information from a relatively small sample selected for purposes that serve the focus of a study (Patton, 1990). Since the case study is defined by Sanders and Liptrot (1994) as a detailed description and analysis of a single project, program, or instructional material in the context of its environment, the case study approach allows for learning about attitudes, feelings, ideas, actions, and suggestions from those involved. This supports the notion

of investigating two exemplary BCCs with distinct and unknown experiences that led to their exemplary status.

Ultimately, Yin's (2003) definition of case study as "investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena within its real life context are not clearly evident" (p. 13) was used. The context in which exemplary BCCs are positioned and developed at PWIs represents an unknown interdependence or process that needs further understanding. It seeks to answer questions like what contexts were needed to establish the exemplary BCC? What actors, decisions, and environments shape the production of an exemplary BCC at a PWI? Yin, along with Creswell (2005), concluded that in order to pursue case study research there must be a clear understanding of the case, contextual information to describe the study site, and adequate information to clearly define the case. Once these have been met, fieldwork is utilized to acquire natural setting data. The researcher then must remain cognizant of the emic (participants') and etic (researcher's) perspectives when collecting and analyzing the data (Patton, 2004). In this study, both sites investigated will focus on the contexts that surrounded the processes, events, and people that shaped how they became established and exemplary.

It is also important to highlight the need for doing a multi-site case study design. Yin (2003) supports multi-case designs for several reasons, one being the vulnerability of single-case designs and the second being the possibility of replication within a multiple case design. Although the contexts the of the two sites of this study may be different to some extent, if I still arrive at some common conclusions, from both sites,



they will expand the generalizability of my findings and even vice versa if analyzing contrasting findings (Yin, 2003).

### **Role of the Researcher**

As a first generation African American male educator working in a higher educational setting, I am aware of my cultural lens relating to the experiences of African American students at PWIs, since I have had the same undergraduate experiences of feeling isolated and excluded. I have lived most of my life with two lenses, one from the African American experience and the other as a minority in the broader, predominantly White society. W. E. B. DuBois (1994) put it best when he spoke of

this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity... and of a two-ness, of being an American, a Negro... two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 5)

This perspective similarly shapes my work as a researcher. Merriam (1998) identified the human researcher as the main tool for data collection and analysis in qualitative research. She concluded that "the researcher thus brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied" (pp. 22-23). Thus, I have reflected deeply on my role as the researcher; and I have become consistently more aware of my biases relating to BCC advocacy and my overall concern for the Black student experience at PWIs. I am fully aware of the relation between my experiences and what literature states about the African American experience at PWIs (i.e., isolation, exclusion, academic/social

integration). These experiences also reflect my subjective biases on Black students and cultural centers, via my personal experiences as a Black male living, learning, and educating in the academy, mostly at PWIs. I agree with Ladson-Billings (2000) who asserted that qualitative researchers should conduct research in a mode of self-revelation, which means that we should always be aware of the multiple consciousness of the researcher. Thus, my ultimate connection to this study is through my experiences as a Black male who attended PWIs for all of my post-secondary education, and my current experiences as a fulltime professional at a BCC at a PWI and a doctoral student studying BCCs.

As an undergraduate at the University of Central Arkansas, I learned how to balance that “double-consciousness” to which DuBois refers. I have definitely experienced racism, exclusion, and discrimination as a minority “rambling” through the culture of a fairly large PWI as a naïve undergraduate and even more as a graduate student with a critical lens. For example, I have been stopped by campus police multiple times without cause, faculty have labeled me overly vocal and “militant” when discussing multicultural issues, and I know the feeling of isolation, misinterpretation, and frustration from being the only one in class that looks like me. Consequently, I have grown accustomed to seemingly always having to be the sole voice for my race when discussing diversity issues in an all-White academic environment, and within all-White environments in general.

I believe that my experiences with prejudice and bias in my academic and professional life at PWIs coupled with my experiences working in a cultural center also

shape my motivation for researching this topic. I know what it feels like to be the only person of color in a classroom or any monolithic environment, having to constantly “speak for the race” or seize opportunities to educate the culturally unexposed. I recognize that part of my role as the researcher is to minimize my bias and this will be done by employing the following strategies: triangulation of data sources through the use of interviews, documents, and observations; production of audible and written records of all data gathered; bracketing of my biases, and member checking to verify their interview and the analysis. This challenges my role as the researcher to be sensitive to my biases related to higher education and African American student experiences. Parker and Lynn (2002) commented on the weaknesses of educational research in that it has a perpetual ability to ignore historically marginalized groups by not addressing their concerns. They conclude that it also de-emphasizes race by arguing that the problems experienced by minority students can be better understood as solely class or gender issues, which do not fully take race, culture, language, and immigrant experiences into account. Maxwell (2005) asserted that, “It is clearly impossible to eliminate the researcher’s theories, preconceptions, and values. The task is not to eliminate bias but to understand how values influence the conduct and conclusions of the study” (p. 91). I am aware that this ideology motivates my role as the researcher. This lens will and must be maintained within an objective balance.

## **Method: Data Acquisition and Analysis**

### **Sites and Sample**

The two sites selected for this study emerged from a clearly delineated process. An initial search to identify exemplary centers using the Association of Black Culture Centers' (ABCC) official directory and "The 100 Most Active Centers" document from the website was conducted. The ABCC is a professional association comprised of administrators, faculty, staff, and students who work in the area of ethnic culture centers, mainly African American or Black culture centers. Next, a panel of leading professionals in the ABCC and administrators having experience with and knowledge of BCCs across the nation were contacted and asked to identify the exemplary BCCs at research PWIs from the original website list. This panel was the Board of Trustees for the ABCC, led by the founder, scholar, and executive director of the association, Dr. Fred Hord.

Finally, a list was generated from the Board of Trustees who were asked to identify the top five exemplary centers as identified in the association, along with criteria or markers that were used to identify those exemplary centers. From this list, a purposeful sample of the top five centers was identified and sent letters seeking their participation in the study. Additionally, phone calls followed. From these conversations, the African American Cultural Center (University I) at a private institution in the Northeast region of the country and the African American Cultural Center (University II) at a public research university in the Midwest were selected (see Appendix A for copy of letter). Each institution was representative of a unique type of institution.

Below I will provide a brief overview of the selected institutions. However, a more detailed description of the settings of the BCC on each campus will be provided in Chapter Four.

**Sites.** University I is located in the Northeast part of the country in an urban metropolis and was founded in the late 1800s. It is a private, secular, coeducational research university, and it is classified as a RU/H institution (high research activity) by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. There are approximately 16,000 students enrolled and 5% of those students identify as African American. Initially established as the African American Institute in 1968, the Institute was renamed in in the early 1990s in honor of the VP of Student Affairs who was a strong advocate for the center's growth and expansion. It has been located on this campus in several locations since its inception and now boasts over 18,000 square feet in its current location.

University II is a comprehensive public research university in a Midwest urban metropolis, and a part of the University System for the state. Founded in the early 1800s it is the oldest institution of higher education in the state and has an annual enrollment of over 42,000 students, making it the second largest university in the state. Black students make up 8.4% of the university's population. Although student protests began in the late 60s demanding a Black Cultural Center, the center opened its doors in 1991.

**Sample.** The participants of this study consisted of faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and students at two different PWIs who have experienced the BCC from its inception to its current day operation. These participants were initially selected using

purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) defined purposeful sampling as a method of selecting information-rich cases that will enhance the researcher's learning of the phenomenon being studied. For this study participants were recommended by the BCC directors, faculty members, administration, and fellow students involved with the center. They were selected for their unique experience with the establishment and/or current status of the center. Each participant was invited to participate in the study and then contacted by the researcher via email to explain the study and answer any questions prior to the data collection process. Each participant was provided with a human subjects information sheet (Appendix A).

There was a total of 15 participant interviews, seven at one institution and eight at the other. Three were students and the rest were administrators, alumni, staff, and/or faculty. Thirteen participants identified as Black or African American, while two were Caucasian American. Five participants were women, and ten were men. All participants had some type of contact with the BCC on their campus from its establishment to the current day through programming, outreach, collaboration, administrative supervision, visitation, or employment. The following list identifies the interviewed participants from both campuses. All names used in this study are pseudo names to ensure anonymity of the BCCs and the participants.

*Participants-University I.* Jeff: Jeff is African American and serves as the current director of the BCC, and has been in this role for the past five years. The BCC is named after his family. He is a faculty member in the Department of Political Science and African American Studies.

D'Angelo:

D'Angelo is African American and currently serves as the Assistant Director of the center. He has a Master's in Public Administration and a Master's of Christian Leadership and Religion.

Rolando:

Rolando is an African American male and serves as the Chair of the Department of African-American Studies. He has been chair of the department for four of the eleven years at university. He is also Associate Professor of Music and African-American Studies.

Kevin:

Kevin is an African American male and was a member of the original United Black Students Association that protested for the BCC. He currently serves as an Executive Administrator at University I. He received his BS from University I and has been working at the university for fifteen years.

Sarah:

Sarah is a Caucasian female who serves as the Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Life. The VP of Student Affairs reports to her. She has a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Michigan State University

Bob:

Bob is an African American male and currently serves as the Associate Dean of Culture and Residential Life at University I. He is the direct supervisor of the Director of BCC.

Kate:

Kate is a Caucasian American female who currently serves as the Vice President for Student Affairs. She is the direct supervisor of the Associate Dean of Culture and Residential Life. She has been at the university for six months.

*Participants-University II.* Ife: Ife is an African American female. She is a sophomore at the university, majoring in Communications. She is a student leader on campus involved in Residence Life as an RA, and she is an Ambassador for the BCC. She is also on the student committee that has been meeting with the university concerning the expansion of the center.

Tedrick:

Tedrick is the current director of the African American Cultural Center. He is also the Director of Ethnic Programs and Services. He has been at the university for 40 years. He has been at director status since 1989. He also serves as an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Africana Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences. He received his B.A. in Sociology and an M.A. in Counseling. His Ph.D. is in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Shirley:

Shirley currently serves as the Assistant Director of the center. She directs the center and coordinates all programming and leadership initiatives out of the center. Her direct report is to the director. She joined the center initially as a Program Coordinator directly after graduating with her BA in Business Administration and being highly involved in the center as an undergraduate. She also has an MBA from the institution.

Rachel:



Rachel currently serves as an Assistant Director in the Division of Student Life at the University. She has a Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. degree from the institution. She is a former Black Student Association president and worked as a Graduate Assistant in the center while she pursued her Master's degree.

Nick:

Nick is a graduating senior and student leader on campus. He served as Vice President of the Black Student Association and was an ambassador for the center.

Troy:

Tory is a graduating senior also. He is the current president of the Black Student Association and is highly involved in the student steering committee that is working with administration on expanding the center.

Felisha:

Felisha is a senior level administrator in the Division of Student Affairs at the university. She is an alumnus of the university and one of the original students who was responsible for the center opening in the early 90s. She also worked in the center as a Program Coordinator.

Bob:

Bob is the Vice President of Student Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer. He has served in the Vice President role for 18 years. After fifteen years of initial service in this role, he was also made Chief Diversity Officer. He has a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Michigan and is a full professor in the College of Education.

## **Data Acquisition Strategies**

Yin (1994) wrote that the first principle of data collection in case study is to use multiple sources of evidence. This evidence can take the form of interviews, observations, documents, or the use of audio-visual materials in qualitative research (Creswell, 2005; Yin, 1994). For this study data were collected using the following major strategies: individual semi-structured interviews, field notes, document analysis, and observations.

**Interviews.** BCC directors and upper- level administrators of the institution were the initial study participants who played significant roles in the emergence and existence of the centers. (e.g., past and present: administrators, community members, students, alumni, and staff. They served as what Patton (2002) defined as, “people who are actually knowledgeable about the inquiry setting and articulate their knowledge -- people whose insights can prove particularly useful in helping an observer understand what is happening and why” (p. 321). The interviews were semi-structured, using open-ended questions from a single interview protocol and they lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes (See Appendix B attachment for interview protocol).

Using purposeful sampling with the BCC director and one upper-level administrator (Provost or VP of Student Affairs) as the first points of contact, the additional participants were sought via targeted emails and voluntary participation. Email addresses were garnered from each director and the institution’s website. A follow-up phone call was made to secure participation. Merriam (1998) referred to interviewing as “... the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies in

education" (p. 70). Semi-structured interviews were used for this study. According to Merriam (1998) and Maxwell (2005), good interview questions can be divided into six types: experience/behavior, opinion/value, feeling, knowledge, sensory, and background/demographics. There were five interviews at University I and six interviews at University II. The interview protocol for this study specifically consisted of questions that fell under the following: experience/behavior, knowledge, and background demographics. The goal was to ultimately extract as much information needed to identify the evidences of how the center became exemplary. The interview protocol (see Appendix B) included questions that focused on the evolution of the center and questions that pointed to its current position and function at the institution. These questions allowed the participant to identify what phase of institutionalization the center currently operates under according the Zucker (1977). All interviews were face-to-face and were held either in the BCCs of each campus or in their work offices.

**Field Notes.** During each interview, detailed notes were taken to enrich and complement information retained via the audio recording. These notes included nonverbal messages such as body language, artifactual communiqué, eye contact, gestures, posture, and verbal/nonverbal tone. As a skilled interviewer, it is important to note the unspoken messages that may add richness to the data (Patton, 2002). Additionally, field notes were used to: (1) assist with verifying the accuracy of transcription; (2) contribute to a thicker, richer understanding of the participant's experiences and perceptions; and (3) reduce bias by revealing events that could influence the researcher's interpretation of meaning.

**Documents.** Over 40 documents were reviewed to gain insight into institutional efforts and collaborations that helped establish and maintain the center on campus. These documents included: BCC brochures, archival records of student demands, campus media reports, letters from university presidents regarding Black student unrest on the campus, program evaluation documents, administrative letters and meeting minutes, current departmental documents (e.g., organizational charts, budgets, facility layout), institutional planning and strategy documentation, and institutional archival histories. These documents helped identify the status of the center on campus and helped reveal how the center fits in the overall campus environment and culture. Most of the documents were accessed through the BCC directors and the campus library archives office. The documents were stored electronically in a secure place for after analysis.

**Observation.** Observations were used to collect data for the present study, and the type of observation used was as an “unobtrusive” non-participant observer. Observation is the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places, which can be done in several ways... participant observer, a non-participant observer, or a combination of both (Creswell, 2005). Serving as a non-participant allowed for the alleviation of any obtrusive bias and to observe in an objective well-balanced manner. Arrangements were made with the BCC director at the institution to spend time observing activities that took place at the center. I participated in a comprehensive tour of each center, attended events, watched student activities and interactions within the centers, observed staff participation, and observed the physical

set-up of the building to gain a general sense of activity and operation of the BCC. These observations were helpful in explaining the present-day context of the BCC and the showed how the center impacts campus. Observations in this study were useful for several reasons. They served as a method of multiple source data triangulation as was discussed above. They were also useful to the researcher in building familiarity with certain unknown phenomena in each center and the rapidly changing social situations of each environment (Adler & Clark, 2003). Observation also assisted in revealing unknown information that wasn't present in the documents or interviews as it relates to the internal culture, energy, and presence of the BCC. Each observation consisted of a tour of the facility, a period of non-interrupted observation time during times with high student traffic, (as identified by the director) and an unobtrusive observation of at least one organized event in the center.

### **Data Analysis Strategies**

Following data collection, the interviews yielded thick, rich descriptions of how the BCCs emerged on campus and continued to thrive and survive. First, all interviews and data transcripts collected through observation and document review at each site were reviewed to gain a clear picture of all the data (Creswell, 2007). This also helped to sort out the wealth of information that had been collected about and from each site. The next step involved a focus solely on the transcribed interviews. In order to analyze the interviews, the researcher used a method of locating patterns within the random data (Patton, 2002). The researcher combed through each individual interview, making

note of multiple codes and responses from participants at each site. As a result, several coding categories were created after reviewing interview responses.

Additionally the interview data, observations, field notes, and documents were analyzed separately using Boyatzis's (1998) process for analyzing qualitative information, thematic analysis. The researcher focused mostly on inductive coding (i.e., from the raw data), but also analyzed the data from theory driven code (i.e., criteria related to the theoretical framework on Institutionalization and/or the ABCC criteria list) that spoke to the study's research questions. This allowed for trends and themes within the multiple data sources (Merriam, 1998) and responses to create categories. As themes developed, they were coded and categorized.

Criteria used to identify themes were initially identified by: (a) the number of different individuals who brought up the theme, and (b) the amount of time they discussed the concept and level of significance they placed on a theme. While reading each interview carefully, the researcher searched for quotes that were reflective of the phenomenon, in this case the BCCs characteristics. Several notes were made to offer initial definitions and statements about the phenomenon for each site.

Upon categorization of each site, 54 initial invariant categories were identified for both sites, 26 at University I and 28 at University II. As categories, became repetitive, they were eliminated, while others were collapsed into meaningful clusters. Once individual themes from each site were pulled from the data (Chapters 4 and Chapters 5), a within and cross analysis was utilized for each site to identify similarities and differences between data sources (Chapter 6). This allowed for additional unexpected

outcomes from both centers to emerge. Additionally each center was analyzed from the lens of the theoretical framework on institutionalization, as defined by Tolbert and Zucker (1999) for analysis. The criteria as identified by each phase of institutionalization were applied to the findings from both sites to see if they truly were institutionalized. (Chapter 6)

The analysis of the data collected in this research was done utilizing the strategy of “voice, perspective, and reflexivity” (Patton, 2002), which allowed the researcher to identify how his own voice and perspective impacted the study with regard to authenticity and trustworthiness. Patton asserted that it is important to find balance between the subjective and objective and to be conscientious of political and cultural influences. This obligated the researcher to find a balance between the subjective and objective in order to interpret the stories that the participants shared. Finding this balance involved the researcher’s ability to be aware of self, his own experiences, and to be conscientious of political and cultural influences (Patton).

This strategy was selected based on my experiences as a Black male who has experienced higher education as a student and administrator at PWIs. As I worked to identify recurring themes, it was necessary for me to be aware of my own biases in this study and respond objectively to each participant whether their responses were in line or opposite of my thinking. I also maintained that this is one institution, at one time in place, and that all of the participants are related to this particular institution. I relied on my knowledge and intuition to analyze the data in a way that reflected the voices of the research participants.

## **Methods for Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Analysis/Validity Issues**

Triangulation, member checks, and peer reviews were used to ensure consistency and trustworthiness of the study's findings. Consistency looked at whether the findings were repetitive and logical. Trustworthiness focused on the researcher's capacity to report faithful representations of the studied phenomena (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999). The purpose of using various means of data collection techniques allows for soundness and triangulation, which includes using various data collecting sources, data analysis, or theories to check the findings of the case (Patton, 2002). The researcher collected and analyzed the data until reaching the point of repetitiveness which signifies saturation. Member checks also were used by asking participants to verify and findings from the study and to verify whether or not their reflections were accurate and complete. The member checks confirmed the major themes that developed at each individual site and for the cross analysis. (discussed in Chapter 7) This ensured that participants felt that their perspectives and experiences were represented accurately. Peer reviews were also used by asking 4 expert BCC scholars and administrators from three different BCCs in the Association of Black Cultural Centers (ABCC) to review the data for consistency and soundness of the themes in relation to the exemplary characteristics at each site and across both campuses. All peer reviewers reported accuracy and affirmed the consistency of the major themes that were developed at each site and from the cross analysis. This ensured triangulation.

## **Chapter 4**



## **AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER AT UNIVERSITY I**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief history, site tour, site observations, and thematic findings for the BCC at University I. Patton (2005) noted that, “the description of the program setting should be sufficiently detailed to permit the reader to visualize that setting” (p. 280). Therefore, it is important to provide a historical perspective of each center, as history sets the context for understanding the foundation of these centers as well as their existence throughout the years. Detailed comprehensive tours of each center will also be provided to give a detailed description of each site. These descriptions will show how the researcher interpreted the physical environment, energy, and layout of the culture centers in this study. The setting is also important for understanding the activities, physical energy, and interactions that take place in the environment (Patton, 2004).

### **Mission Statement**

University I is located in a Northeast metropolis and was founded in 1898. It is a private, secular, coeducational research university located in an urban setting. It is classified as a RU/H institution (high research activity) by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. There are approximately 16, 000 students enrolled and 5% of those students identify as African American. Initially established as the African American Institute in 1968, the center was renamed in 1992. It has been located on this campus in several locations since its inception. African Americans have been at University I since the late 1960s. In 1968 the center was established to develop and implement a long-range plan for genuine effective and enduring Black presence at

University I. In 1992 it was renamed in honor of its Vice President of Student Affairs, an untiring advocate for educational opportunity and excellence. The center is committed to intellectually, culturally, and socially inspiring students toward excellence, success, and service. Through programs, resources, services and activities the center fosters a nurturing, supportive, and welcoming environment for students of African origin. Moreover, its mission is dedicated to engaging the broader university community, the surrounding urban community and the world for balanced student and leadership development enjoined with the promotion and distinction of their career goals. According to the *African American Institute Five Year Strategic Plan Document* (2008- 2011), the center's vision is to become a national model for African American and African-Diaspora cultural centers that effectively provides service, programs, and engages the community and builds toward becoming self-supporting through research, development and alumni participation. While this unit had a commendable goal statement, I was not able to find documentation that measured the outcomes of their goals. (Field Notes, December 2011) Their overall goals include:

- Enhancing the academic quality and reputation of programs and services inclusive of more graduate opportunities
- Promoting distinguished research, scholarship, and interdisciplinary academic activities
- Developing strong alumni participation, development, and self-supporting activities

Boasting an 18,000+ square foot state of the art facility, the Center's programs and services are designed to support students in achieving academic excellence, to assist them in making healthy adjustments to living, participating in academia and in building community. Their major programs and services include:

- Ujimaa Scholars Program
- Legacy Mentoring Program
- MLK Graduate Fellowship Program
- Community/Connectivity and Urban Outreach
- Counseling Services
- Library and Research Collection with over 6,800 books
- Tutorial Services
- The R. L. Technology Center
- Annual Open House
- Kwanzaa Celebration
- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation
- African Diaspora Research And Cultural Expo
- Unity Day on the Common
- Unity and Awards Celebration of Student Achievement & Community Engagement
- Baccalaureate Ceremony
- Partnerships with the Dept. of African-American Studies
- Reconnections Black Faculty/Staff Annual Reception

- African American Mater Artists in Residency Program
- Community Classroom
- Stormy Monday Colloquia Series
- Joint Recruitment/Retention Initiatives for Black Faculty/Staff

**History.** The establishment of the center was precipitated by several events at University I. This brief history provides information on some of those events and their role in serving as the backdrop for the creation of the center. Perhaps a starting point for beginning this history is 1967. University I was considered to be at the back door of its city's Black neighborhood, separated only by railroad tracks. Nevertheless, the community was engrossed with civil rights political activism (Hayden, 1993). Black tenants and homeowners were battling the city government and the citywide Re-development Authority over land use for decent housing and better municipal services, while jobs and fair prices were being demanded from the White merchants. As Black students entered the university in this climate, they struggled to fit into the campus culture and achieve academically. This was a challenge because they were simultaneously being drawn to the activists' environment of the Black sections surrounding the university.

By 1967 there were about seventy-five African American students at University I, with an increasing number coming from outside of the state. The campus climate wasn't welcoming or accommodating to these students, so their success depended on their group cohesion and social support. By 1968 there were over one hundred students at University I (Hayden, 1993), and Stokely Carmichael, national chairman of the Student

Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), came to the city to organize a local chapter. It was through his influence and the local chapter of CORE that twenty-five Black students formed the Afro-American Association (AAA) at University I, which planted the seed that would grow into the Cultural Center. The preamble of the Constitution of the AAA read, "Believing that Black people who are interested in Black solidarity, Black pride and Black self-determination should work together in order to approach these ideals... we have incorporated ourselves under the name Afro-American Association" (Hayden, 1993, p. 6). The first action of the AAA was to establish a Black History course at the institution. They were able to accomplish this agreeing to have the course be called American Negro History instead of Black American History and to allow a qualified White instructor teach the course. This effort also marked the inception of today's African American Studies department at University I.

The Afro-American Association also began working in the Black community with organizations like the Tromley-Seath Tenants (pseudonym) organization and convinced the university to establish both cooperative work placements and work-study jobs with the tenant group. They continued to organize and build partnerships with the university and surrounding Black community. In May of 1968, after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the Afro-American Association presented thirteen demands to the President of University I. These demands included: fifty new academic scholarships for Black students, a minimum 10% African American presence in the entering freshman class, and fall orientation for Black students. Along with these

demands was the request for an African American Center for students to feel safe and celebrate African American culture. This idea was best captured by Billy Jenkins (Hayden, 1993), a 1968 member of AAA:

The Black student is taught to react to the response of White people and not to the problems of Black people. The frightening product of this entire process is the confused Black college graduate, thrust out into a hostile racist society and handicapped by tunnel vision and a self-negating perspective. He/she faces society a living example of his/her White inferiority. He/she knows little of his rich cultural heritage, has little racial pride, and often looks with contempt at his/her own... Thus a center was needed to help these students grow as African Americans.

(p. 10)

The official Center proposal was presented to the university on February 14, 1969. There was an AAA Steering Committee established that identified the initial six goals for the Center, which were to: (a) Establish an independent organization supported by the university; (b) Develop a Black Studies Program; (c) Gain resources to help meet the local Black community and its needs; (d) Develop a collective action approach within the university's Black population to address political issues; (e) Improve Black student retention at the university, and (f) Protect Black student and community interests. On May 9, 1969 the Steering Committee of AAA met with the President and submitted the proposal to establish an African American Center that would encompass an African American Cultural Center and the Black Studies Program.

The Center would be responsible for the development of the Black Studies agenda, serve as a research and information center, stand as a cultural center with a library, and would serve as a clearinghouse for special programming such as tutoring, cultural events, and academic prep programs for incoming Black students. After some initial resistance from the Faculty Senate, the president and the university trustees approved the financing of the Center idea, including a Black studies program. In a memo (Hayden, 1993) dated May 30, 1969, the President sent a memo to the faculty and staff relaying that, "I shall be glad to recommend...facilities be made available for the Center and that funds be provided for the appropriate furnishing of the center...In order to accomplish this I have asked (the) Vice President to make a careful study of what space might be allocated..." (p. 11).

This support represented major moves by the AAA and this momentum also resulted in a four-day Black Cultural Festival, a \$10,000 donation to purchase books, and a facility located at the intersection of campus and the local Black community. The students wanted the Center located in the nearby community, which they also wanted to serve. One past director explained, "Our center had two responsibilities...to be of support to students of color and nation-building. We wanted to have skills courses and Black History and culture for young and old in the community. We knew the community needed resources too...so why not have a place where the student and community folks could come together" (African American Institute AAA Archive Documents, p. 8). Thus, the top floor of a local house, located in the Black community was established as part of the Center to house Black studies courses, cultural programs,

and the library. At University I, the on-campus facility was a temporary site at a small two story building at 104 Forsyth Street. The BCC was comprised of these two locations and was utilized by the students and community people. However, as the student population grew in 1969 and 1970, the newer students did not have the same sense of community as the previous founders and students. By September 1970, the full-time student population approached five hundred and the students wanted all of the center's services and programs to be on campus. A clear split developed between community-based students and campus staff/students who wanted everything to remain centralized on the campus.

Gradually a majority of the center's activities moved to the campus location with the exception of the library. This location became more student-centered, campus driven, and connected to the university, unlike the community site which was less structured and student operated. Nevertheless, a newly designed campus site was readied for occupancy by the fall of 1971. There still remained challenges between students and staff over the political direction and operation of the center. The first director from 1969 to 1971 remembered his tenure there as "building and turmoil...friction and joy. It really was a transition because you had all this student energy that had been crafted and focused...and now we had the question of a staff coming into the picture and the relationship between staff was a very complex challenge" (Hayden, 1993, p. 15). As more staff entered the picture, more organizational and ideological struggles emerged between staff and student leadership (Hayden, 1993). The divide clearly delineated between one side which wanted a



pseudo-separatist approach from the university, and the opposing side which believed that some degree of integration into the university structure was necessary. These opposing approaches were congruent with the early Civil Rights Movement conflicts where ideals of integration versus Black Nationalism were debated and eventually began to coexist in Black America. However, this became a vulnerable time for the center as the political struggles left the center in conflict and the Black community in shock. (African American Institute AAA Archive Documents)

This moment of internal struggle brought with it casualties of conflict, as the first Director left to become Director of a local Black United Front agency. The new Director then came to the university in the winter of 1971. The trouble between the students and the staff over how the center should operate was still present, and as the strong positions hardened, the Black student body and staff/administrators of the Center became more polarized. Frequent meetings ensued, often ending in shouting matches questioning whose interests were being served as it related to the direction of the center. This ideological battle filled with frustration and anger also led to the dismantling of the Black student newspaper. All of this eventually led to the resignation of the second Director of the Center.

In 1972, another male became the new director of the Center, and under his leadership, reform at the Center ensued. He was able to revitalize the center and bring direction that encompassed the old traditions while moving the center forward. The center began to address the concerns of more than seven hundred Black students who were now in need of tutorial assistance, counseling/advising, learning materials, and a

support staff that could address the African American experience from an academic perspective. In response to these student needs, The Project Ujima, a collaborative initiative with the African American Studies Department was established under the new Director's leadership, along with the department becoming fully accredited. It was also under his leadership that the A.C. Memorial Center was established on the first floor of the Center and the Center's Library expanded to a dynamic and significant academic unit. By 1976 there were over one thousand Black students at University I and the center continued to thrive and meet the students' social, cultural, and academic needs on campus. (E. Johnston, personal communication, December 2011) By 1979 the director left the Center for an Associate Dean position at University I, and reflected, "In the mid-70s for the first time Black students began to realize a total integration in the University...the Center gained national attention as Black leaders and scholars like Jessie Jackson, Dr. John Henrik Clarke, and Julian Bond visited the center." Through the center's Memorial Student Center, the BCC at University I and local communities were able to access Black cultural heritage through programs that explored the Black experience globally ranging from seminars, films, social programs, to peer mentoring, academic support, and retention initiatives.

In 1981 a major organizational change took place for the Center, as it became part of the Division of Student Affairs, under the leadership of the Vice President for Student Affairs. It was at this time that the center was positioned for even greater impact and established new initiatives including:

- A student trip to Africa during the summer of 1982 through the

### Operation Crossroads Africa Initiative

- The Distinguished International Visitors Program, which brought thirty-five educators, lawyers, political activists and health specialists from twelve different countries to campus
- The Unity and Awards Banquet which honored Black students' achievements on campus
- The Oratory Competition, which is named after a long-term African American administrator and University I who became the first Director of University I's Minority Affairs office across campus
- A complete and fully staffed center under the leadership of its new director in 1985 (African American Institute AAA Archive Documents)

In 1987, the twelfth Director of the center began his leadership period, and on October 5, 1992 the center was named after the VP of Student Affairs and community leader for his untiring educational advocacy for Black students at University I and throughout the local community. This marked the rationale for naming the Center after him. His untimely death on July 3, 1992, expedited several formal dedication ceremonies in May 1993, and this is when Shirley Jenkins became the director of the Center followed by Kevin Green in 2007. It was under her direction that the Center faced even more expansion.

In 2001, students, alumni, and staff rallied in support of the continued and expanded presence of the center as the university began renovating the academic

buildings and landscape surrounding the center which threatened its existence.

Students presented the following eleven demands to the president:

- The center remain a freestanding building in its present location.
- There be a large scale expansion and enhancement of the building, including making it handicapped accessible, and correspond architecturally with the surrounding developments.
- The number of staff of the Center be increased to broaden academic support services to all Black students over five years to increase their retention and graduation rates.
- The Ujima Scholars Program be expanded to a five year program to support retention and graduation rates of those students.
- The operating budget of the center be increased to support expanded academic services and programs.
- A Black Student Presidential Advisory group be implemented to serve as a link between the President's Office and the Black students.
- The center be included in the University I Campus Tour
- There is a formal integration of the African American Studies Department and the center to include locating the Department within the physical space of the renovated Center
- Student Financial Services office employ Black Financial Aid advisors that are specifically assigned to deal with the financial needs of the Black students.

- There be a section of the CO-OP department devoted to community service in minority communities and positions for Black owned businesses.
- There be an increase in the percentage of full-time Black faculty to equal increased percentage of full-time Black students to 105 at University I  
(African American Institute AAA Archive Expansion Documents )

In lieu of many intense rallies, meetings, and interactions with administration and the university president ensued, a compromise emerged. All the demands were not met, but the center was expanded to an 18,000+ square foot state of the art facility with an increase in staffing and budget. In 2007, the current director was appointed. He is Assistant Professor of Political Science and son of the late Vice President of Student Affairs for whom the building was named after. The university and local community formally welcomed him with a gala celebration and accolades.

The BCC at University I has come a long way boasting a history of determination and progress. Throughout the past forty years it has continued to provide a host of campus and community programs, services, and initiatives. While many programs are new, it continues to maintain its strong tradition on campus. It has been a place of refuge for thousands of students who have utilized the center for its social/cultural support programs and community involvement.

### **Comprehensive Tour**

The BCC at University I is the “African American center” of the campus. The center is a place that has been on University I’s campus in several different locations.

Needless to say, the current facility is new and expansive boasting over 18,000 sq. ft. It is not a free standing facility, but it is quite modern and encompassing in its layout and setup. Upon entering the building the energy and environment invoke feelings of ethnic culture, history, and comfort.

As you walk up to the Center, the entrance is positioned as an elegant, tall corner section of a building that is clearly attached to a larger academic facility. Visible from the entrance is an elaborate 40 to 50 foot high, multi-layered window/glass display that wraps around the entire corner of the building. The window is traced with neat metal paneling and, the overall view is quite imposing. As you walk through the front glass doors and enter the small foyer area between the entrance and the lobby, the name of the center greets you sitting on a high concrete marker between two very tall metal columns. The name of the center, which is the name of the VP of Student Affairs from 1992, is embroidered in regal lettering. You also notice billboards sitting outside the entrance door displaying upcoming events on campus and locally. One billboard is publicizing their annual Kwanzaa event; and the other is for a New Orleans jazz brass Band event.

The elegant foyer area overwhelms you, and there is an amazing cathedral sized lobby with an aerial view. The right side of the lobby has cathedral size window-walls facing the street with a 40-50 step stairway leading to the second level in front of the windows. Between the stairwell and the elaborate window wall facing the street, there are numerous African flags lined along the window. In the middle of the main lobby floor is a large West African Adinkra symbol embossed on the floor. As you continue

walking forward, there is a welcome/reception desk with a hallway to its left. On front of the welcome desk there is a glass display emblem that says, "Welcome to the African American Center," with the VP of Student Affairs name on the bottom. Behind the welcome desk is a banner and a five foot painting of the Vice President of Student Affairs from 1979 - 1992 for whom the center was named. Next to the welcome desk, there is a brochure/literature stand promoting the center, community and campus activities.

As you look to the left of the lobby welcome desk, there are three sets of wood-panel doors that lead to the A.C. Memorial Center, which is a large ballroom style multi-purpose room. It is named after an African independence leader who was dedicated to ending Portuguese rule in Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands. He was assassinated when the Portuguese government attempted to overthrow his independence party. The memorial multi-purpose room is large enough to seat 300-350 people comfortably. It is a large multi-purpose room that is utilized by students' organizations, local organizations, and campus departments for meetings, activities, and events. I did note walking in, jazz music playing which added a lively yet classic energy in the room. There were also chairs scattered in the middle of the room as if they are setting up for an event. There is another large West African Adinkra symbol on the floor, and the room is overwhelmingly decorated with various African-American art and imagery around the walls including pictures of African/ African American leaders like Malcolm X, Louis Farrakahn, Amilcar Cabral, and Sojourner Truth. Also, there are paintings of Black women holding various flags that display the Black heritage colors

red, black, and green. Looking towards the front of the room there are two big columns that stand on each side of the room. Near the center of the room there are about 120 chairs. There is also a podium, an American flag, African-American Center title, and University I banner standing next to the podium, which also has the Center's name displayed on it. There appears to be electronic multi-media here as well, and a plethora of African-American art displayed all over the walls. As you exit the A.C. Memorial Room leading into the main lobby area, there is a nice lounge area that extends under the stairwell and into the line of flags facing the glass window wall. Behind the lounge furniture, there is a wall with a huge image of an African woman in African garb. The image is at least 10 feet tall.

In a hallway past the reception desk there is an elevator on your right in a smaller hallway that appears to lead to another section of the facility. There are multiple small pictures and artwork of African-American imagery on the walls as you walk down the hallway. You continue walking past a vendor area with more beautiful African-American art displayed on the walls. Immediately past the vendor area is a very professional and technologically-based conference room with a flat screen television on the wall, a nice conference table with about 12 to 15 chairs around it, and more African art on the walls. As you walk back out to the back area of the reception desk area, you continue further into an adjacent hallway that has a billboard with Kwanza flyers posted on the walls. This display board is actually on the wall of a classroom, one of four classrooms of varying size on the hallway. These classrooms house academic classes for various departments. The classrooms have a black



chalkboard, an electronic chalkboard, a VCR-DVD player, and multimedia access. There is also a digital clock on the wall of each room. Among the three different classrooms; two rooms seat about fifteen comfortably. Another room is a little larger, that seats maybe about 20 to 25. At the end of the classroom wing, there is also a student organizational suite, which is a fairly large room with multiple chairs, a table, and computers and technology for student organizations to use to conduct their business. It is not as large as the other rooms but appears to be utilized since there are boxes and decorations scattered across the table. As you come back out into the hallway and walk back down past the classrooms there are restrooms on the opposite side of the hall.

Coming back out to the lobby area, visitors can go up the 45-step stairwell to the second level of the facility, which houses the student lounge, staff suites, the R. L. Technology Center, and the library. At the top of the stairwell you walk into the R. L. Technology Center foyer/lounge area. There is a beautiful photography montage under the title "R.L. Technology Center." The technology center was named after a famous basketball player, who went to the university. He and his family donated money to the center for the building of a computer and technology lab. The large photo collage has pictures and photographs that relate to his legacy at the university. As you walk into the main hallway area, to your left is the computer lab and in front of you is the library. The computer lab has about 10 computers, and it also has a conference room table where students can study. It is a nice-sized modern room with a computer board and projector access.

Next to the technology center is the African American Center Library, which has an additional door scanner that you walk through. It is a full fledged university library system, boasting over 6,800 books. There is a display outside of the door that features African-American books on African American art. As you walk through the scanner system, there are more African flags. There are about ten bookshelves with African flags on top of them. There is also beautiful African American art figurines displayed throughout the library windows. The reception desk, as you walk into the library is to the right. In the far left, there is another door that leads to the main librarian's office. There are also tables and library chairs in the middle of the room that can seat about thirty people comfortable. The library appears to be fairly utilized with about twenty students sitting at various tables in the library, mostly of African-American descent.

Leaving the library/technology center lobby, there is a smaller staff suite that leads to more office space for three administrative offices. Near the staff suite is a student lounge, which is filled with about 10 students relaxing, interacting, and studying. Most of them are African-American but there are other students who appear to be of Asian and Indian descent. The lounge has a television that sits in the middle of several couches and entertainment options (i.e. video games, games, and dvds). There is also a kitchen area aligning the rear of the lounge. As you exit the student lounge, to the left is the Ujima Scholars wall of fame, which is a peer mentoring program. The wall of fame features all of the annual class photos on the wall, starting from 1999 and ending with 2011. The photos are large and colorful. Each scholar class picture greets you with smiles as you walk down the hall. Continuing the journey down the hall,

there are administrative offices at the end of the hallway situated near a copy room and an exit door. Further down the hall adjacent to the student lounge is the 216 suite, which houses offices for the director, assistant director, another coordinator's office, another lounge area, and a reception desk area for the academic tutoring. Each office has a large desk chairs and décor displayed on the walls. The director's office is the largest with an amazing city view and a large meeting table in front of a television. During the tour, I again noticed two students who appeared to be of Indian descent sitting in the office chatting with the director. At the tutoring reception desk outside of the director's office are the more African-Americans and Indian students lounging and laughing. The energy in his office is positive, vibrant, and familial.

Throughout the entire facility, there is a sense of anticipation and excitement as a number of students and staff prepare for their Annual Kwanzaa celebration later in the evening. The entire center is accented and decorated with various African geometrical designs and African American imagery. The furniture, floor design, carpeting, and walls have neutral earth tones that give the environment a refreshing yet soothing energy. Everything in the center is in mint condition and the overall ambiance of the facility exudes a welcoming yet modern and cultural energy.

### **Observation**

In addition to interviewing participants, reviewing documents, and taking field notes, I was able to observe the center and some of its activities and programs. One specific event that I observed was the annual Kwanzaa Celebration. This is an annual African American Cultural Celebration that recognizes the Nguzo Saba or Seven

Principles. It is an annual event at the BCC at University I and it brings together campus and community participants to celebrate African American culture.

As I was finishing up field notes, the beat of an African drum saturated the center. It was so intoxicating that it drew me in, and I immediately closed down my research work and headed downstairs to see what was going on. It was the start of the Kwanzaa Celebration. People of all ages appeared to march into the Multipurpose Room, which was decorated in African décor with a Kwanzaa table in the front of the room. On the table were African Kinte cloth coverings, candles, and a bowl filled with fruits and vegetables. The room was filled with about 200 people including students, children, parents, grandparents, community members, and various ethnicities. The African drum created an energy of excitement, anticipation, and community...as the people appeared to clap, smile, dance, and greet one another. As a tall African American young woman with a natural Afro hairstyle walked to the podium and introduced herself as the hostess for the evening, I realized that it was going be a student focused and student-coordinated event.

The event was filled with vibrant cultural music, expression, and fellowship. There was a performance by the University Gospel choir who sang several African and African American hymnals. There was also an African dance performance by a group of African dancers from Ghana. During this dance audience, the call and response energy led to several audience members joining the dancers on stage. The crowd was delighted and excited. The lead dancers continued to give the audience verses to sing as the dancers taught African dance moves to the volunteers on stage. The beat of the African

drum was the only music for this dance experience and continued to get louder and faster. This brought about a communal feeling and the audience began circling the dancers singing and chanting. Students were clapping, snapping, and encouraging each other. The energy was quite high and the entire audience was on its feet cheering and singing with positive excitement.

The Kwanzaa Candle lighting ceremony stood out the most because of its sacred, cultural, and familial dynamic. Various students came up and recited each principle of the Nguzo Saba and explained the concept. For example, the first student came up and said,

I light this candle for Kuumba which is a commitment to being creative... creativity within the national community of restoring our people to their traditional greatness. Thus, leaving our community more beneficial and beautiful than we inherited it. I am Kuumba and I encourage you all to find the creativity within yourselves and cultivate it. This candle is for Kuumba." (Field Notes, December 2011)

The crowd then responded with the African term "Ase" (ah-shaye) which means "so be it." As each student came up to recognize a principle for the Nguzo Saba, the audience continued in its call and response role. While observing, there were three Caucasian students sitting behind me chatting softly. I overheard one student say, "Man if we celebrated these concepts in my house, it would be great. This is quite interesting, and I like the powerful concepts." (Field Notes, December 2011). This quote is symbolic of the energy in the room. After the candle-lighting ceremony more dancing and singing to

the beat of the African drum ensued. The event ended with everyone standing up in a circle and chanting “Harambee” seven times while moving their hands up and down. Harambee is a Swahili term meaning “all pull together”. This concept perfectly describes the experience of observing the Kwanzaa Celebration. Everyone exuded a spirit of collectivism and support. Afterwards, there was a feast and fellowship and everyone enjoyed a full course meal that featured traditional African and African American dishes. I remember the lively energy and smiling faces as people fixed plates, ate, took pictures, and hugged. There was definitely a sense of family during the feast and fellowship. Leaving the event gave me a sense of encouragement, community, and inspiration.

### **Analysis of Interviews and Other Data**

For data analysis, the researcher reviewed all data for the center at University I. Once data analysis was done for the center, the researcher identified several emergent themes that represent the exemplary characteristics for the BCC at University I. These themes include: a) Stable Leadership, b) Political Leverage Based on Fear and Accountability, c) Collaboration with Academic Affairs, d) Aligning with the University’s goals, e) Community Engagement; f) Student Engagement; g) Alumni Support; and h) Campus Connections.

**Stable and Consistent Leadership.** Although the leadership of the center changed frequently in the early years, it was consistent and filled with committed leaders who wanted to push the center forward. This proved to be a consistent characteristic that shaped the path and current operation of the BCC at University I. In

this study, many of the interviews, historical narratives, and institutional documents that served as data for this study, indicated stable leadership as a major theme. Specifically the data showed that stable leadership at the head of the center and across campus with other mid and upper level administration make the difference. Leadership has to also come from the top down to ensure the center's persistence. The VP of Student Affairs summarized:

Our center certainly has a profound tradition and presence on campus. They have longevity, they are well funded by the university, they also play an important role in serving minority populations and making those connections to the local community. There is a consistency of them providing support to students here on campus. The institution has a genuine commitment to this population, and recognizes the value of the program and how it relates to the overall institution. The local community connections are significant. This program was started from a living figure in people's minds here and has the local roots, It remains connected to the community.

Throughout the history of the center, having a director that was committed to the mission and purpose of the center was central to the center persisting and expanding to its present-day status.

An upper level Student Affairs administrator explained:

Leadership at all levels is important...particularly in the institute itself...There should be vibrant leadership using the center to serve a defined need for the Black community on and off campus that is also aligned with the university's

missions and goals. This leads to building bridges with institutional leadership, you know upper level administrators who set institutional goals. And our center here definitely has done that.

Another staff member clarified how the legacy at University I continues to thrive and grow due to the leadership of the current director who is the son of the Administrator for whom the center is named. He passionately summarized:

Now I would add to because (Bob) is in the seat, there's even more value because people know who is father is but also know him for the work that he does with students on campus, initiatives in the community, and academically through research and teaching. He walks into any community meeting, everybody knows him, whether it's because he was born and raised here or whether it's because he's his father's son and represents his family's legacy of impact. It's not just that he works at the center...the center takes on an old-school familial relationship. It becomes a community space and is Grand Central Station because of the leadership here.

This is a poignant point because it suggests that stable leadership is key in the continuance of the center remaining exemplary...particularly leadership that carries the respect and impact of the community and campus.

The director at University I also discussed the importance of stable leadership being able to adapt to student needs:

Over time, the center, although when it was founded was very much a tool for



advocacy, a tool for support, a tool for connecting as a community, needed to adapt. As the university changed, the needs and demands on the BCC here changed, as well as the students themselves. But I am of the mindset that as a leader, I have to meet the students and the institution where they are. As leaders, we must understand the interests of the students and the institution to adjust accordingly.

The director of the center at University I was also highly visible and actively engaged with the center and campus community and was consistent in his efforts to connect his center across campus. In addition to being actively engaged with the students at the annual Kwanzaa ceremony, he was well known in the community networks. This was evident by the various community and campus leaders I was introduced to while walking with him to a community service basketball tournament that was held on campus. We were at the at the ladies basketball game career day that brought in hundreds of elementary students from the inner city schools. As the director would introduce me to various people, many would shake my hand and say, “you are with good people” (Field Notes, December 2011.) It was clear that he had built rapport with many of the community leaders, and he was instrumental continuing the legacy of previous Directors in building opportunities to connect the campus with the Black community.

The Senior VP of Enrollment and Student Life commented the importance of the director’s (leadership) ability to be present and consistent on campus:

Leadership plays a huge role. I think it's just critically important, particularly for the director. It sets the mindset of the center. It sets the tone, has the capacity to create alignment to university's broader mission so...I think in the case of everything that affects the student outside of the classroom, like Student Affairs, athletics, cultural centers...you have to be aligning the work of the unit with the mission and vision of the university and the think the directors ability to do that helps secure a vibrant future. I think in this climate where campuses have to continue to engage a broad stakeholder community, the director's ability to be a senior ambassador and maybe even fundraising is very important. It depends on how far you wanna take that role, but even if they aren't generating funds, they are generating friends, keeping stewards and keeping relationships over long periods of time.

Another staff member commented on the leadership consistency of the Director of the center and how it transcends and inspires not only the office staff but upper level administrators:

I've mentioned the line of amazing Directors that have come before and laid the foundation for us. But our current Director comes from a line of leadership considering the center named after his father but he has paved his own way as well. Being a Howard alum, he understands the HBCU but also the Black community experience, growing up here. He also has a PhD from one of the most distinguished universities in the world in Cambridge. And so our director down, has the ability to walk with kings without losing the common touch, and

that transcends down to us staff and the students. So we can be real with our community, but at the same time we can sit with the university president and be very clear about the needs of the students here but then also the community that neighbors the university.

**Political Leverage Based on Fear and Accountability.** The BCC at University I has been able to establish, maintain, and even expand its presence on campus by challenging the campus administration and using leverage based on fear/accountability with the campus administration and culture. An administrator explained it best:

Now, our center was born out of the civil rights movement, and at this institution there has very quiet talk about moving to multicultural centers'. It's been very limited, but there's been talk about it. It's going on and off at different levels over the course of my seven years here. But I took over this role of Associate Dean where I oversee the culture centers almost three years now, and I haven't heard it that much. But one of the reasons that keeps that at bay is fear, first of all. And I would also say that would be one of the reasons why it would not happen at an exemplary African-American center like ours: the sheer fear. For that to happen, there would be blood on the streets. Nobody wants to aggravate Black folk. You know the institute and its director are respected here on campus, and doing things on campus. There's just not enough upside to, in my mind, engage in that type of behavior. We have a history of challenging the university, so it wouldn't be worth it.

The center was renamed and expanded in 2004 due to students challenging the university and that dynamic of threat or fear is still present today on campus. One faculty member/administrator explained:

And so with that fear, the presidents over the years have always maintained that we need to pacify. So, there's a passive situation at the university's infrastructure, but it's again that threat of, because I would almost imagine, if they mess with the center people would probably leave. I would leave. And there are about 4 or 5 faculty members who would leave, who would land jobs like this because, again, the higher you climb the academic level, the lesser there are people who look like you. And we're not lazy people. So we're all spitting out research, doing all kinds of crazy stuff. So the realization of the passive arrangement by the university also means that they have to be active in terms of keeping us at bay.

The BCC at University I has been able to use the dynamic of fear as leverage to connect with more areas on campus and increase their impact on campus and the in the community.

**Collaboration with Academic Affairs.** The center at University I has been able to align itself with the Academic side, which has allowed them to connect more on campus. This gives them a more capital on campus, and the notion of being academically connected was mentioned repeatedly in the interviews. One staff member described their role as the Academic coordinator in the center:

We have a tutoring component that I supervise which focuses on academic collaboration. We work with departments to tutor almost any subject, and have a nice space allocated specifically for tutoring sessions. A lot of times we get former students that have utilized the resources to come back and tutor, which is great, because they can really kind of serve as adjunct mentors for students. We also connect with academic departments to identify high need courses and other success strategies for students. We've found that many academic departments support our efforts and support us in any way they can. This helps us connect more on the academic side so we can support our students holistically.

One faculty/department head explained the importance of meshing cultural and academic environments at the center:

The centers that have been able to survive and succeed... have had an intellectual if not research-oriented aspect to it, which is what we're trying to collaborate on. The center was the intellectual place. It was the academic unit before my unit was birthed out of it. And because of the university infrastructure, we had to separate. So one of the challenges we wrestle through is how do we re-connect these three areas: the study of the African and African-American experience within the center, an academic focus of being a degree-bearing unit within the center, and also having the cultural aspect within the center that fosters a community-based relationships? So that you have this full-on three-pronged, four-pronged operation- that's what we're working on now.

The Director discussed how they are integrating research into their agenda on campus by connecting with departments across campus:

We are excited about our African Diaspora Research and Cultural Expo that highlights the research of our faculty study the African Diaspora..and to be able to house that research in our library upstairs is quite rewarding. Of the other cultural centers that I know about, none of them are really doing research, and I think research is going to be a big part of the long term success, the relationship with the academic side. Some of them have good relations with the academic side, but none where the relationship is respected on the academic level, where you're seen as a peer as opposed to just a bunch of guys across the street that are providing a service.

The center appeared to do a formidable job of placing academics at the core of their mission and creating an environment where students can come and get academic support and cultural uplift. During the interview with the Director, an energetic student came in and shared an academic success story with the Director. The student wants to be a Sports Journalist and came in to thank the Director for helping him review his sports journalist script assignment. The student also wanted advice on acquiring an NBA internship. The conversation was very lively and engaging. The student appeared to be very appreciative for the support and was happy to share his success. (Field Notes, 2011) After the student left the office, the Director shared how he initially got connected with the student and intervened for him for a class by being candid, honest, and challenging the student to be more engaged in class.

I actually called his professor to check on him and found that he wasn't actively engaged in the course. So I got with him and told him to, you know, step his game up. Well, the teacher knew me from a previous committee that we sat on and did me a favor. He let the student retake the test and the student did much better. (Field Notes, December 2011)

The Director was able to help the student by being honest, challenging him, and following up. This is an example of how building relationships within Academic Affairs connected the BCC across campus through quality relationships with faculty and students. The center has strategically collaborated to the Academic side to build their rapport on campus with students, faculty, and staff.

**Aligning with the University's Goals.** This was another theme that was significant and prevalent. Many of the interviews discussed the importance of the center being aligned with the goals and outcomes of the university and not marginalizing itself. One upper level administrator admitted:

Well, I think that they play an important role and they are recognized for the great work they do over there. But it is also, again, in line with the overall college's mission and goals. I've seen organizations with similar kinds of centers, place themselves at odds with the institution...and I don't understand why they do that. I think sometimes it's tied to the temperament of the leadership of the center who creates this dynamic of working at odds with the institution. It's as if they try to make themselves a "bumper", creating a "we vs them" kind of environment. It doesn't work well, because at the end of the day, every part of

the university is a part of the university. You shouldn't develop into some other kind of agenda that doesn't align with university, that's when you marginalize yourself. But the director here doesn't work that way, they work to stay engaged with the university's goals and mission.

Another administrator discussed how the center supports the university's goal of increasing minority student enrollment:

Well, I think that the center has always been a part of the admissions plan here. We have talked a good game about bringing more and more Black folks to this campus. And I don't know the exact numbers now, but I remember where we used to be. The director of admissions was getting her head handed to her because many were asking, 'you're telling me that we can't find blank, blank, blank number of Black students to come to institutes and meet our criteria? So, although that is happening now, there are more and more African-American student scholars attending this school. But I think the most succinct answer to your question would be that I do believe that the university does have a commitment to bringing in bright young black individuals to the school, and the BCC is used to help recruit them, and to keep them.

The Director of the center discussed the importance of the staff position responsibilities in the organizational chart and how it specifically addresses the goals of the institution:

And then the academic advancement and research position in our office is focused on how we advance the center with the aggressive agenda that the



university has, trying to continue to move up the ladder of *US News and World Reports*. So, we are definitely trying to keep pace with where the university is going, I'm trying really hard make sure that we have a structure and the pieces in place to keep up with that, the pace; that direction. It's not easy... But, for example, if alumni think about trying to work with Black alumni, they call us first. That was always the case. When Admissions has a group of kids coming in from an urban area, they call us first; it was always happening. When the president has something that involves a dignitary that's African-American, his office calls on us. So my goal and my vision is to be able to build those pieces up to make sure that as the university goes, we go.

Upon interviewing staff in the BCC one staff member discussed his role in adjusting to the institution's needs via the space of the center:

So part of my role is also operations, and that's been kind of institutionalized this year, even more with reserving the space here, the upkeep of the space, and, really, that's one of the things that I enjoy about my position but really gives us value for the university, because space is always at a premium by units across campus and by us being able to control such a high volume of space here, in addition to the high-quality space, it makes us very valuable. So my role basically this year has shifted a little bit to really focus on the operations. So we're also really kind of building the infrastructure to prepare us for some of the shifts and changes that are going on at the university level.

The Director's supervisor commented on the importance of the center adding to the university as well:

Again, from my perspective it's how they are involved in the university, how integral they are in retaining and recruiting students, how much at home do the students feel at the institute? Are you sitting at various tables around campus?

I'm finding out our Director here sits at tables I didn't even know he sat at. And I'm serious.

Finally, the Senior VP for Enrollment and Student Life commented on how important it is for the leadership of the center to connect with the university's vision and goals:

I think it's just critically important. It sets the mindset of the center. It sets the tone, has the capacity to create alignment to university's broader mission so...I think when you look at everything that affects the student outside of the classroom, like Student Affairs, Athletics, etc...you have to be aligning the work of the unit with the mission and vision of the university. And I think the Director's ability to do that helps secure a vibrant future. I think in this climate where campuses have to continue to engage a broad stakeholder community, the Director's ability to be a senior ambassador and maybe even fundraising is very important. It depends on how far you wanna take that role, but even if they aren't generating funds, they are generating friends, keeping stewards and keeping relationships over long periods of time.

**Community Engagement.** Another salient theme focused on how the center used the local community to establish, maintain, and even expand the center's presence

on campus. The BCC at University I emphasized the importance of being engaged in the local community and collaborating with community organizations that helped build a positive relationship between the institution and the community surrounding community. This created social and political capital on and off campus that benefitted the center and the institution as collectively. One administrator who was a part of the original student protests reflected on how the local community was instrumental in the center's establishment. He remembered,

The rest of us became Black Panthers when Martin Luther King was assassinated, which was in '68, and we all were on campus. And we were their connections to the Black community in the city. It just made a difference in terms of issues around sustainability, accountability and how much they would respond to the community. And then, we were also more politically involved locally. But we were instrumental in getting the university to establish the first center. Now like everybody else, they wanted to placate us, so they gave us sort of crumbs, in the beginning. But there was some sympathy, and actually it was mostly Jews, which is also interesting. There were some sympathetic administrators in here, so that gave us some credibility and legitimacy. But the community activism connected with the student activism gave us the groundwork we needed.

Another administrator discussed the importance of building bridges with the local community and using it as influence on campus:

But the reality is many of the decisions, up until recently, have been based on the fear of community rebellion or community revolt. So it's no irony that the first

director was a brother, matter of fact, a brother who, for many years, was a city councilperson. Now he wasn't city councilor back when he was director, but he was a community-engaged activist. You can have several former Directors who were community-engaged activists. So you influential community people who, at the pull of any dial, could deliver. And so within that pacification you have visionary leaders who are able to do some stuff, so you partner with community. Thus, the community members historically played an integral part in the establishment and influence of the BCC.

When looking at cultural programming and involving the local community, a staff member commented on the importance of this relationship:

And so, for us, as we're having our Kwanzaa celebration tomorrow, on Friday, December 2nd, one of the things that we'll have is African drummers here. We'll also have a Gospel choir with a lot of people from the community. So we're getting two or three different aspects of culture that you can't go anywhere else in the city and get in that way, but we're having it here. So you have communities being engaged with the university community, faculty staff, and students. And so this is a unique, I think, opportunity for other culture centers and other institutes around the country to really consider their relationships with people internally at the university, but also external relationships and creating that experience where people are learning about culture.

The BCC at University I was well connected with the surrounding local communities and this reflected a large part of the African American student population on campus.

Thus, partnering with the local community broadened the African American context on campus and created a better environment for the university to connect with leadership and resources off campus.

**Student Engagement.** The BCC at University I had an overwhelming connection with students, historically and present day. Without student participation and engagement, the center would not have been established nor operating at its current level of impact on campus. This was evident in the participant interviews, document analysis, and observations. Student engagement has been a cornerstone of the center's establishment, growth, and impact on campus. This was also evident in most of the programming and resources utilized in the center. They are heavily student-centered and empower them to create their experiences through the center.

The Director of the BCC reflected on conversations he had with many alumni who were a part of the student movement that led to the establishment of the center:

When they established the demands, people were in various places as to what the priority was on that list of demands... whether it was getting more faculty, getting more financial aid, getting courses for African-American students, or having representation on the university's committees that help make a lot of decisions. So people were all over the place, but they were all committed to establishing a space that Black students needed and that they could see as their own. And although it was founded as a tool for advocacy, a tool for support; a tool for connecting as a community, the needs and the demands on the center

changed because the students themselves had changed. So student participation has always been as the core of our center.

The Director also discussed their approach to meeting the students where they are, even the midst of their shifting needs and actions.

In the last, say, five or six years, their interests have shifted. They don't see that activity or that militant mechanism as being as critical to their success as they do people that will help to advocate for their support by way of resources, their academic success, their support by focusing on where they want to go and what they want to do as a career. They come now, as opposed to then, much more focused on when they get out as opposed to what's occurring while they're here. And so we don't have as much of the public student movements like we did, say, thirty years ago. And that's bitter sweet. For some that's disappointing. But I'm also of the mindset that we have to meet students where they're at; and if we are in fact interested in the students and to serve their needs, then we really need to understand what is their interest and where are they going and what are they doing. Regardless, staying engaged with them has been rewarding to us.

The Director consistently emphasized the important of engaging and empowering the students to take advantage of all the resources that the center and the entire campus had to offer.

The Assistant Director also expounded on how the center truly engages the students at all levels:

So it came out of student protest. It was established by students and it's really run by students. I mean we're here. We have a staff of eight. We're here for the students. And so it becomes administrative at times, but year by year by year the students' needs, their desires, have really come out in terms of the development of the center. And so, when you think about some of the programming that we have now, they come out of the needs of the students. The Umoja Scholars Program was established in 1972 to bring in more students of African descent and students of color. It was started off with tons of students and it really has served as a support mechanism for students that may be from the local area, and even students of color from around the greater region. The mentoring program was established out of that need to have closer contact with students that have been through the process of going through a PWI and really need a support in addition to the tutorial programs that we have. And so everything that's come forth through the institute has been because of the students' needs. Come to the Kwanzaa event tonight and you will see.

He was adamant about ensuring that their office programming reflected student input and participation. Upon observing the Kwanzaa event later on that night, it was quite evident that students took the lead in planning and implementing a large scale event that brought together students, faculty, staff, and the local community.

The Associate Dean for Student Life made an interesting assertion when discussing the student engagement and retention goals of the center:

I do not think, matter of fact, I know, the university has a commitment to bringing talented Black students to this campus. No question about it. Retention is the byword here on this campus. And our BCC is seen as a key player in the retention of Black students. And this works because the students see center as home. This is what the students feel, and we know what they feel just by listening to them.

The student feelings were evident in many of the interactions during the observation of the center. Most of the office workers were students, and energy of the students in the facility exuded ownership and excitement. I recall over-hearing one student in the lounge display his excitement for his role in the Kwanzaa Festival later on that night. He stated, "Man I can't wait to see everyone tonight! As much as we practiced...it should be good!" The energy and appreciative tone of his voice communicated his engagement and appreciation with the BCC (Field Notes, December 2011). It was evident that student engagement was imperative to the existence of the center.

**Alumni Support.** Another prevalent theme was the center's connection and collaboration with alumni. Alumni play a huge role in the center and its impact on the campus, particularly with money and providing mentorship to undergraduate students. Participants discussed how engaging the alumni helps the center sustain itself fiscally and culturally while moving forward with the institution. The center uses alumni s to fundraise for the center's scholarship awards. The Director of the BCC discussed the various ways alumni give back to the center, when he stated,



We have several other groups, like the Iotas who used to have a scholarship fund named after one of their brothers that passed away prematurely. They committed \$50,000 to the scholarship fund that they want the center to be responsible for. Our Black alumni base has really become energized. They formally announced recently that they had reached the \$100,000 goal in raising money for our center.

When commenting on whether the BCC would ever be shut down at University I, another campus one administrator discussed the negative fiscal effect it would have on alumni support. He vividly explained:

There would be blood on the streets. Alumni giving would dry up. And Black alumni at this institution now have become a powerful lobby. You know we are getting money hand over fist now. If this center were threatened to close down, that goes away fast. And it wouldn't happen. Nobody wants to aggravate Black folk. Nobody wants to be called racist here. This is not an upside to do it. To me, that's what it is. And my guess is that at strongly, well-developed BCCs that have their influence on campus and out in the community are bringing in alumni dollars.

Another staff member mentioned how building networks and partnerships with alumni are important when he said:

We have set up extensive networks with our Black alumni. It's been huge. We're consistently trying to raise money, create scholarship funds and they have responded generously. We have good partnerships with the law school. There's

a professor in the law school, who went here. She's done a lot of work. Nelson Mandela appointed her as one of his chief advisors in South Africa, and she is a partner of the center here. You have the former producer of the Martin Lawrence show. He was one of the students involved with our center. I think it's those networks that you see coming out where you have people of very prominent stature coming out of our center, and that makes it huge. So, whatever way you can reach out to that network of alumni or friends of the center, that's been really, really helpful for us.

The BCC at University I is intentional and strategic about cultivating positive relationships with alumni to help impact the center's presence on campus and in the community. This was also quite noticeable at the Kwanzaa ceremony where I was introduced to several alumni members in attendance and participating in the program. The Director even invited me to their Young Black Male Institute the next day, which was a partnership with another alumni group.

**Campus Connections.** Participants at University I also stressed the importance of making quality connections across campus. They expressed that being intentional about establishing meaningful relationships at all levels of campus was vital to the existence and expansion of the exemplary BCC. The center at University I is connected in several areas, ranging from the Graduate School and Financial Aid who support their MLK Graduate Fellowship Program to their African Diaspora Research Expo which features research conducted by students, faculty and staff from various academic departments across campus. This builds rapport and respect.

The Director at University I emphasized the importance of campus relationships and talked about how they make it work on campus: He summarized:

The importance of relationships cannot be overstated...And I've really been trying to put us on the radar screen at all levels of the university, from the board of trustees to the president and it's been really helpful. It's been successful...it has translated into a much more inclusive approach of the administration. For example, if alumni think about trying to work with Black alumni, they call us first. That's always the case. When Admissions has a group of kids coming from an urban area, they call us first...When the president has something that involves maybe a dignitary that's African American, his office calls on us. He's hosted stuff in our building.

An upper level administrator commented on how being genuinely connected across campus keeps their center thriving:

I would say that would really be a part...of any exemplary center, it has to be strategically linked to other areas of the institution in a real, functioning way. So that could be Admissions, maybe Financial Aid, anything that leads to the retention of students...it needs to be hooked into those key areas. And I think number one that makes ours strong and less vulnerable to being collapsed.

One administrator at University I commented on the historical interdependent relationship they have had with the BCC:

My department evolves from the BCC here. And by 1975 we became accredited and a full fledge department of the university where he had tenure track lines

being hired and eventually a chairperson. So clearly its history is reactionary, which also creates the biggest challenge...how you move something that reactionary into progressive and proactive phase, which I think, us, working together, have been very successful in cultivating that quality connection of collaboration.

## **Summary**

This chapter provided a summary of the site visit and findings related to RQ1 that looks at the factors associated with the exemplary Black Cultural Center at University I. The major findings of this site included several salient themes that can help us understand the characteristics of this particular exemplary BCC. These include: a) Stable Leadership, b) Political Currency Based on Fear and Accountability, c) Collaboration with Academic Affairs, d) Aligning with the University's goals, e) Community Engagement, f) Student Engagement; g) Alumni Support; and h) Campus Connections. While others were prevalent, these themes were most salient in understanding how the center was able to establish, maintain, and even expand its presence and impact on campus. The center at University I has a profound history of being proactively enmeshed with the local community and the campus culture. The BCC has been able to harness those relationships on and off campus to create a climate that has allowed the BCC to establish and expand its impact on and off campus.

## **Chapter 5**

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER AT UNIVERSITY II**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief history, site tour, site observations, and theme findings for the BCC at University II. University II is a comprehensive public research university in a Midwest urban metropolis, and a part of the university system for the state. Founded in the early 1800s, it is the oldest institution of higher education in the state and has an annual enrollment of over 42,000 students, making it the second largest university in the state. Black students make up 8.4% of the university's population. The center opened its doors in the early 1990s, after two distinct time periods of student demands, initially in the 1960s and again in the late 1980s. Its original inception emerged out of Black student protests on campus. In 1968, African American students at University II, led by members of what was then the United Black Association (UBA), petitioned the University Board of Trustees and the president to make University II more conducive to African American students, faculty and staff by establishing a Black Cultural Center. The university administration responded negatively. However, in the late 1980s, students once again demanded a Cultural Center, and the university responded affirmatively. The center opened in 1991. It has been a cultural and programmatic force on campus for the last twenty years.

#### **Mission Statement**

The BCC supports the mission of the university by recruiting, retaining, and encouraging the matriculation, growth, and development of students. However, the center's major focus is to address the academic, social, spiritual and cultural needs of

the African American student population. A fundamental element of the university community is a pledge of civility. Thus, the center strives to create an environment that promotes justice and fairness. The center also challenges systematic forms of oppression, which historically have inhibited the personal development of individuals who have attended predominately white colleges and universities.

(<http://www.uc.edu/aacrc.html>)

Encouraging the ever-increasing diversity of the student body, the center strives to empower the campus to become more enlightened about the African American experience. The center values interaction with members of the university community and visitors as an opportunity to encourage positive relationships. Ultimately, the BCC here is committed to placing students at the core of service through empowerment and opportunity, as well as access to superior levels of resources. While fostering students' growth and development, the main focus is to address the academic, social, spiritual and cultural needs of the black student population. However, as an urban educational institution, the center acknowledges the increasing diversity of the student body and pledges to reach out and connect beyond our primary constituencies while also cultivating a relationship with our prestigious faculty, staff and administration. The center values robust collaboration within the division, in addition to potential bonds within academic affairs. The influence of the center does not stop at the perimeter of the campus, but touches the greater local community as well as many communities across the United States.

Since its inception, the center has worked to serve the campus and local community using several objectives. According to its website and Cultural Center Archival Documents the objectives include:

- Advising Students-- advises and provides a safe and affirming environment for students by listening, assisting, supporting and collaborating with the university community.
- Advocating-- has a serious commitment to intercede on behalf of the students and to speak for them in areas where they are not heard
- Developing Student Leadership-- challenges students to enhance their educational experience through campus organization involvement and community service. The center believes that today's students are tomorrow's leaders who are in-tune with their communities.
- Helping Students Excel-- Each Monday the center offers study tables where students are provided with free tutors from various areas of study.
- Meeting Student Needs-- helps students excel by addressing the academic, social, spiritual, personal and cultural needs of black students at the university. It is our goal to assist in building a positive, well-developed and balanced environment.
- Promoting Access to Technology-- with our changing society, the center has accepted the challenge to increase our students' knowledge of the technological world in which they live.
- Serving the Community-- has a commitment to connect campus,

community and continent. (African heritage)

With an approximate 7,000 square foot facility, the center boasts several programs, support services, and resources for the campus. These include:

- The AA Choir and Njozi Concert Series (founded in 1992)
- Brothers And Sisters Excelling (BASE) & Transitions Program
- Harambee Series – lectures and dialogues on Black issues
- Akwaba Black Student Welcome Week
- Bring Your Own Bang Recognition Ceremony
- Annual Kwanzaa Celebration
- Annual Kuamka Week & Celebration I
- MLK Celebration
- Kujifunza Recognition Ceremony
- Ushindi Weekend
- Tyehimba Graduation Celebration
- Meeting Rooms
- Conference Room
- Student Lounge
- Banquet Space
- Big Screen Television
- Black Publications
- Resource and Reading



## History

University II was one of the most volatile campuses during the Black Student Protests in the late 1960s, even to the point of graduation ceremonies being cancelled (B. Jackson, personal communication, February 6, 2012). The inception of the BCC stems from Black student protests on the campus in 1969, where members of the United Black Student Union (UBSU) asked for a BCC along with other demands. The university did not respond well to the student protests nor their demands and filibustered the discussion until all students with demands graduated (B. Marshalla, personal communication, February 6, 2012).

It all began with the university's first major student disturbance on a Tuesday, in the spring of 1969. After a closed planning meeting, the UBSU gathered at the University Center Bridge and began reading aloud their 18 demands to the university to combat their racist campus experiences. Using a bullhorn, they began marching towards to the administration building, while reading their demands that are summarized below:

1. Add over fifty new Black faculty and department heads in academic departments across campus (Sociology, Philosophy, History, Design-Art-Architecture, Mathematics, English, Political and Education).
2. Consider a Black administrator for the Vice Provost position.
3. Add a new Black coach for track, football, basketball, and baseball all subject to review by UBA and the Black community.
4. Hire a new Black administrator in the Office of Admissions.

5. Insert an Afrocentric curriculum to the Fine Arts and Music.
6. Implement a name change to courses in the department of English and World Literature.
7. Provide an opportunity for Black students in the College designated for undecided majors (University college) to take courses in other colleges and receive credit toward graduation.
8. Ensure a ban on all university construction that would impede the Black community housing surrounding the campus, unless reviewed by the UBA.
9. Require all students to take at least one course on Black studies.
10. Incorporate some Black literature in all types of English courses.
11. Comprise a committee of Black students and faculty to review courses that do not relate to Black culture in an appropriate manner.
12. Establish a Black Studies program and hire a permanent co-coordinator for African Studies
13. Establish a Cultural Center or Black Liberation School to serve the needs of Black Students on campus (News Record, 1969).

After gathering at the University Center Bridge, the crowd of about 150 students, Black and White, marched to and entered the administration building looking to speak with the university president. They were told that the president was out to lunch and would return around 2:30pm. The Black student leaders then told the secretary the president had until 1:30pm and continued to wait in the hallway. At approximately

1:20pm, the university president came into the foyer area through the back door and Black student leaders accosted him with their demands, giving him 24 hours to reply. He did not respond. Voices from the crowd immediately demanded that he be given the megaphone to address the crowd. The president declined and requested more time, but the students then requested that classes be cancelled until he replied. The president once again declined and walked away. The students then left the building and picketed outside the administrative building. Ironically while the Black students were protesting, the Provost for Academic Affairs issued a letter to the campus community explaining how the university was committed to Black students but wasn't publically communicating its efforts because it believed in "quiet action rather than rhetoric" (Sack, 1969, p. 1.). This "quiet action" response became the standard university approach in responding to the students. A few days later the university president released an official press release responding to the eighteen demands presented by the United Black Students Union. He addressed some of their concerns by stating that the university had already been making moves to bring in more faculty, more diverse curriculum, and more Black students. However, there were no direct responses to the specific demands that the students had submitted.

The Faculty Senate passed a resolution backing the president's response saying, "Be it further resolved: that the faculty fully endorses the statement of the President on May 20; that the University will tolerate no further disruptions of the classwork or other normal campus activity" (Sack, 1969, p. 1). However, in the words of the current director of the center, "the students demanded a Black Cultural Center and the

university administration responded with a ‘hell no’” (E. Abersome, personal communication, February 6, 2012). One of the original members of the UBSU also noted that, “the university decided to wait until all rabble rousing students graduated and basically ignored the student’s request for a cultural center...thus nothing happened. That was their strategy” (M. Marshalla, personal communication, February 6, 2012). Proceeding this time, there was no Black student activism requesting a center. Things went back to an inactive Black student environment until the late 1980s.

In 1989 a group of Black students from University II were on a college campus tour sponsored by the BCC director, visiting various universities that had cultural centers in the south. Upon visiting the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Culture at Vanderbilt University, the students were profoundly inspired by the idea of establishing an African American Cultural Center on their campus, due to their feelings of campus isolation. Thus, when they returned to campus they began meeting and organizing to develop a case for a BCC on their campus. They still felt that they were immersed in a campus that was unwelcoming and hostile for them, and this became the rationale for their proposal. Because the students were assimilated into the predominantly White campus at this point in the late 80s, there were no public outcries or rallies. Nevertheless, they still were conscious of the unfair treatment they received and felt on the campus. They felt that a center was needed to serve their issues and concerns.

They began meeting with SGA leadership and organizing the idea of a center. They garnered student support and then went to the only African American serving on

the university's Board of Trustees. His initial response was resistant and oppositional. The students went back and facilitated a comprehensive research project via the university archives outlining how the university's climate hadn't been welcoming to African Americans over the last 20 years. It was in this phase that they realized that back in 1969 there were Black student protests and demands for a Black Culture center that were ultimately rejected by the university administration. This information, along with qualitative campus newspaper accounts of discrimination on campus for the last twenty years, gave them the foundation they needed to return to Black Board of Trustees member for a second time. It was at this meeting that he agreed with the students' agenda and decided to donate \$10,000 of his own money to establish the center and meet with the president of the university. The students began to realize that their non-combative approach was benefitting their cause. One of the original students described it best when she said,

While they did protest, they were very respectful in the way they moved and operated. Our students had a very uncanny way of dealing with our administration. They weren't too confrontational to get results. But they were smooth operators and knew the art of diplomacy, negotiation, persuasion, and communication. Our students really were eloquent...they were polished, and knew how to build a case for the center (M. Marshalla, personal communication, February 6, 2012)

In 1989, UBSU formally submitted a proposal stating that African American students wanted to create a positive environment on campus in which their presence on

campus and history would be more accurately represented. The proposal requested the establishment of the African American Cultural and Research Center and summarized the goals and objectives of the center which included:

- To provide opportunities for meaningful interaction among faculty, staff, and students
- To develop a series of cultural programs that will promote an ethnic awareness for African American students and the entire university community
- To support academic activities
- To promote the development and advancement of African American culture in the areas of music, fine arts, theatric dance, and the literary arts
- To foster cultural identity and pride in such a way that African American students will be able to be challenged as well, to become enriched and broaden the traditional values of this institution
- To promote education and cultural learning outside of the typical classroom environment
- To prepare students to become viable participants and leaders to the university system
- To prepare students to become viable future citizens of the community
- To continually challenge the university to remain sensitive to and aware of the issues related to cultural diversity
- To build relationships with the community, civic, state, and grant agencies

who have interests in the mission of the African American Cultural and Resource Center

- To acknowledge and encourage successful and outstanding accomplishments of African American students while matriculating at the university
- To be committed to the needs and in tune with the reality of those needs of African American students (United Black Association Proposal, 1989)

In addition to these main goals, the proposal focused on the center having programmatic, administrative, research-based, and community initiatives. The president of the university set up a Feasibility Committee, chaired by a White male administrator in May of 1989, to establish the need of the center. This eventually led to a vote from the Faculty Senate to establish a center. Upon seeing the proposal from the students, the Faculty Senate voted in favor of establishing a center.

As a result of this proposal and vote from the Faculty Senate, the university's students, staff, the president's office, faculty senate and Board of Trustees made an institutional commitment that provided the support necessary to open the African American Cultural Center at University II .Upon receiving institutional support for the center, there was a scouting phase where a Steering committee consisting of students, faculty, staff, and community members began the next steps, which were to:

- Assess the campus for potential locations for the center;
- Formulate the design of a potential center; and
- Outline the operation, mission, and staffing of the facility.

Seeing that there were limited spaces on campus, the Dean of Students-Director of Auxilliary Services eventually found a large space on campus attached to a Residence Hall to serve as the initial and temporary space for the center. It was clear that, “there were also administrators who were culturally competent and supportive of diversity and that made a difference” (M. Marshalla, personal communication, February 6, 2012). The center opened September 24, 1991 and has been operating on campus for over twenty years. There were reports from several administrators interviewed that the university is in the process of remodeling and expanding the center, since it is still located in its initial temporary location. This would explain the center’s suitable yet “threadbare” physical set up. It is evident that the office and its operation have outgrown the physical space.

### **Comprehensive Tour**

Attached to a large Residence Hall, the African American Cultural Center has been operating at the University II’s campus for 21 years. It is located in one wing of the building with approximately 7,000 square feet. As you walk up to the facility, the building appears to be two levels with long reflective glass sections lining the width of the center and small wrappings of brick surrounding the edges of the 21 foot windows. Above the reflective windows near the bottom level is a section of white lettering that displays the center’s name. As you walk up the pathway around the corner and up the stairs, the entrance of the building greets you. The entrance is not modern, and needs renovation because it lacks a distinctive or attractive appearance. There is definitely an “adequate yet needs improvement” feel. As you curve around the sidewalk towards the



entrance, there is a sign posted in the ground that also displays the name of the center. Upon entering the building you are standing in a narrow hallway with white walls. A door entrance is on the left wall next to a billboard with various flyers and brochures. Another hallway veers left towards the opposite end of the hallway. Turning immediately left into the first door, you find yourself in the main multi-purpose office area, which houses most of the center's activities. It is a large programming lobby space area in the middle of the room that seats about 50 people comfortably. It has a living room feel and appearance. There are about sixty chairs set up workshop-style with electronic media available and a projector-screen ready to be utilized.

Behind the workshop space, there is the welcome desk with flyers and brochures that highlight the center's programs and the local services about African American culture (i.e., hair salons, stores, and cultural dance opportunities). There are students and staff with Kuamka Week t-shirts interacting throughout the center preparing for an Alumni Workshop and Reception to begin. Behind the desk is a student worker who greets you with a smile. Behind her desk is an office section that hides two smaller offices where the Assistant Director and program coordinator work. These offices are small enough for a desk, two chairs, and are decorated with African art. The Assistant Director is sitting in the office with three students, preparing for the rest of the Kuamka Week events. The rear left side of the lobby area is filled with tall windows that stand behind three or four enclosed cubicles. In front of those cubicles sits a long table with refreshments on it ready to be consumed. Beside the cubicles there is another hallway that leads to the restrooms and vending machines.

As you leave the front desk area and turn left, there is a conference room that seats about eleven people with a pentagon shaped table in the middle. The room is fairly small and intimate. There are supply boxes surrounding the office, as if they are about to be utilized for an event. There are also file cabinets and tables outlining the room with literature and planning documents for the Kuamka week activities. There is loud music playing as the Kuamka live radio show begins in the main lobby area. The room houses other items such as an outdated computer desk, storage case, and other random items than can be placed in storage, but they are rattling from the loud bass coming from the main lobby area. Immediately next to the conference room is the student lounge, and it has a plain, over-used feel and appearance. This is the room designated for students to watch television, study, and/or “chill out.” The lounge is dimly lit, but has several couches and chairs for students to relax. There is a medium sized television elevated on a wall television stand and magazine racks filled with African American periodicals and books. Scattered about the lounge are books, newspapers, small tables, and racks. Five students are hanging out in the lounge which appears to hold maximum of about ten people comfortably. Walking pass the lounge, you find yourself back in hallway near the front entrance.

Essentially, the facility is out dated and in need of renovation, as there are so many artifacts and office materials housed in the facility. There is hardly room to display or adequately place things. Nevertheless, the number of cultural artifacts, artwork, and figurines are a distraction from the worn floors and walls.

## Observation

In addition to interviewing participants, reviewing documents, and taking field notes, I was able to observe the center and some of its activities and programs. During my visit to University II, the BCC was in the midst of its annual Kuamka Week Activities. Kuamka is an African-based concept that means “in the beginning.” It is the second installment of the center’s four-pronged Afrocentric-based Retention model that they use to target their African American students. Kuamka is a week-long celebration which includes the Rites of Passage ceremony for Transitions Freshman students, the coronation of Mr. and Miss Kuamka and the recognition of students who have excelled academically or Kujifunza. During my visit, most of my time for research took place in the BCC, so I was immersed in the Kuamka celebration. This section highlights these observations and impressions.

My initial arrival in the center was met with student excitement and activity. I was there to connect with the director and was told to meet at the center. As I walked in, the environment was filled with anticipation as students in red Kuamka shirts smiled, chatted, and moved about the center putting up decorations. Upon entering the center I was greeted with several students smiling and saying, “Habari Ghani, welcome to the African American Cultural Center. How may we help you?” (Field Notes, February 2012). They were apparently preparing for an alumni presentation and mixer. As I waited to connect with the Director, various students came up to greet me and asked if I needed anything. This eventually led to various conversations with students because they were quite hospitable and engaging. They excitedly explained to me what

Kuamka meant and the list of activities that were taking place. They invited me to attend all of the events. One student came up and asked if I was a graduating senior. Flattered, I said “no,” but this led to a conversation about them going to graduate school and wanting guidance in applying to College Student Personnel Programs. Again, the dialogue was quite engaging and pleasant. I noticed that the center didn’t look as bad as the “call to action” video portrayed. Prior to my visit, I ran upon a “call to action” video put together by the students asking the university to provide more resources to upgrade and expand their current BCC. The video showed footage of the “subpar” center and built a formidable case for more funding. While the building had an “over-used” appearance, it didn’t appear to look as bad as I anticipated. However, it did not look like the modern facilities that surrounded it. Nevertheless, the students and staff were pleasant, grateful, and very hospitable. It was an atmosphere of familial excitement (Field Notes, February 2012).

I was also able to attend and observe the Kuamka 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Red, Black, Green, and Gold Ball. The theme for this year was Live Out Loud 2012, and the event exuded the theme perfectly. This is culminating event for the week and it consisted of the official Rite of Passage Ceremony for the Transitions freshmen and the coronation of Mr. and Miss Kuamka. The event took place in the University Center Ballroom due to the large participation. As we walked in there were hundreds of students and family members dressed in formal wear sitting at tables decorated with African colors and motifs. There was soft yet uplifting music playing in the background as students chatted with friends and family, took pictures, and hugged each other. What stood out

to me most was the attendance and sense of pride exuded by all the attendants. There were approximately four to five hundred in attendance and they were eating dinner and having a leisurely time.

We were seated at the table with Miss Black who represented the state, and the program ensued. The lengthy program included: an African Libation ceremony, the Transitions Presentation and Charge to Freshmen, the Passing and Acceptance of the Freshman Torch, the Kunjufunza Recognition Ceremony, the Scholarship Awards, the crowning of Mr. and Miss Kuamka. Interestingly enough the time went by fast due to the culture of excitement and affirmation. Throughout the entire program, there was a feeling of affirmation and familial support. As the Transition Freshmen accepted their charge to “represent the descendants of African slaves with dignity, honor, and pride while impacting the university campus,” I noticed how emotionally connected everyone was (Field Notes, 2012). Students were overcome with tears of joy and fulfillment as they passed the lighted candle around and then did their dance tribute. The on-looking crowd continuously cheered and affirmed them. A sense of accomplishment and acceptance permeated the atmosphere. As observer, I felt connected to this community just by being in the room, so there was no doubt that the student’s faces and emotions felt that same connectedness.

What stood out the most was the sacred, communal, and familial energy that saturated the environment. Seemingly the BCC here intentionally creates a sense of support and home for their students. Although the BCC facility itself is subpar by student and staff standards, the impact of the center extends beyond the brick and

mortar. There was a genuine sense of student support, high quality programming, and relationship building that BCC at University II uses. There appeared to be a generational interdependence between the staff and students. The Director set the tone as the sagacious elder, and the staff followed up with a nurturing empowering support for the students. This was evident in the students' nonverbal/verbal actions and the overall energy of the center and the Kuamka Ball experience. The director's Libation statement captured the environment and student impact succinctly. In his interview, he said, "The key to cultural centers is a big room which can bring that Habari Gani together, or can bring that feeling of working together, could bring that Harambee, that "pulling together." The Kuamka festivities at the BCC at University II definitely exuded the "spirit of the community" via my observation.

### **Analysis of Interviews and Other Data**

Several themes were identified from the analysis of the documents, observations, and interviews. For data analysis, the researcher reviewed materials from each center separately. The salient themes included: a) Familial Environment: Home Away From Home; b) Authentic Leadership; c) Training Ground for Future Leadership; d) Campus Collaboration; e) Community Involvement; f) Alumni Participation; and g) Student Engagement.

**Familial Environment: Home Away From Home.** Throughout the interviews and data, participants often made references to the center's familial environment that made them feel as if they were at home. One staff member/alum put it best when she said, "Our students need a place to call home. They need a place to be safe, to relax, to

study, and not feel like people are looking at them; people are judging them. And they've provided that. They've been providing that for twenty years." This notion of family and home became an overwhelming theme. One student leader noted, "So had it not been for the center I would not have been as connected to the university and that goes a long way... whether that be socially, academically, and other things."

Another student commented on how her connection with the BCCs familial environment empowered her campus involvement:

Well, it's so funny. I actually found out about the center by accident. I was looking for classes last year and I ran into the center. I'm like "oh, I'm so sorry. I'm looking for my classes." And they're like "come in, come in." And since that day it just provided me with outstanding experiences....it felt like a family atmosphere. They wanted me to believe they were interested in getting to know me as a person. I can honestly say that all my leadership experiences have stemmed from the center from being an RA, and just being involved on campus, you know...doing Girl Scouts, being an Ambassador. All those things: the center helped cultivate those things for me just by seeking out the good qualities in me, helping me become a better leader.

One of the staff members discussed specific office initiatives that are designed to give students that home away from home environment:

We're also providing a sense of place for those black students, and also teaching the main culture about the Black experience. And then we do all of these things through our different modules, programs, etc. We have a few constituent groups

that have been in the center for a long time. One is the BASE program, which is Brothers and Sisters Excelling, so that's like a retention program. Connected to that is the BASE steering committee, which is the leadership over the BASE program; so they are the mentors in the program and they also are responsible for creating the program. Connected to that is the Transitions program, which are just first-year students. So it's to help them get acclimated to UC, teaching them the tricks of the trade, and hopefully prepare them to be successful here UC, to make it to graduation. The BASE steering committee mentors the Transitions students. So each mentor has about four to five mentees that they're responsible for.

Another student leader discussed how his involvement led him to becoming a brother like figure to other students, adding to that home away from home family environment:

When I came here, freshman year, at first I didn't get involved with the cultural center because I was like, I don't know. So it wasn't until January where I started coming into the cultural center, and I got involved with the Transitions program. And that really helped me and prepared me to really jump start my career and leadership here and to know what I wanted to get into after graduation. The Transitions program was a program for first-year students where they have a mentor and they go to programs every Wednesday at 4:00 PM and it helps them really get acclimated with the college and receive that Black experience on campus. So that's how I started, and I continued to get involved



I've been a mentor for four years over people: I feel like I have a whole bunch of kids. So I think the center here is definitely a benefit to Black students here because if it wasn't for them, a lot of students wouldn't graduate.

**Authentic Leadership.** As the participants were interviewed many of them commented on the overall importance of leadership, particularly as it relates to the Director and the staff of the center. Upon reviewing documents and interviewing students, staff, and administrators, the authentic leadership of the Director was strongly identified as an instrumental part of the center being established and thriving on the campus. The VP of Student Affairs commented on how the director's leadership shapes the center's impact on campus. He stated:

Strong and genuine leadership is key...it takes a person with clear vision, creativity, persistence, and fortitude ...who understands the landscape of the academy and how it functions, knows how the academy functions and is being able to interact at all levels is also important for the leadership of the center. Our director is a gentleman who has a Ph.D.; he is a professor in the Africana Studies program, he has been here a long while, he is engaged with the executive leadership of the school and with the students. He has created an environment of high regard for our center here, and he is regionally and nationally connected...All of these things, I believe gives us the stability to have a platform to build which lessens our risk profile and gives us the ability to moving forward.

One administrator/alum discussed the leadership impact of the Director and the staff of the office, particularly the Assistant Director, who manages the center on a daily basis.

I mean Doc gets a lot of shine because he's the director, but rightfully so, not to take anything away from him. It was his brainchild, his baby. But the (Assistant Director) has been there for ten years now, something like that; and the leadership that she's given other African-American women, like even with her work that she does with the men, is incredible. It's something that people send their children here because they trust her, like "I met you and you told me you would take care of my child." And that's hard with first-generation students. Parents want to make sure "my baby's ok." So that leadership: it's really bar-none.

Another administrator/alum spoke on how leadership and tradition keep the center thriving on campus. She pointed out:

I'm going to say it's the director here. I think his tradition has helped. I think to the staff that, you know, he's been a symbol throughout the years. I think that's helped it. I think you have to have a person with a vision of students who see the need and utilize it as well as a staff that's willing to implement it. And you're going to implement it at crazy hours: twelve-hour days. I'm afraid I'm working on "E" right about now. But that's what it's about; and I think that's the way to go if it has to be those pieces and for people to care and connect to that history.

Another staff member commented on the Director's ability to create campus programming that genuinely retains students and brings them back to invest in the center. She said, "I also think he has created a model, where former students who went through his programs, loved the programs, and somehow we end up staying and working here...and that is because of his leadership and impact on us."

The students also recognized how genuine leadership is integral to the center's impact on student engagement and the campus community. A student leader expressed his appreciation of the leadership of the center by saying, "The director and the staff create good relationships with the students, and they really work hard. Like this weekend is Kuamka weekend, which is the major coronation pageant and rite of passage ball. They are there the entire time work with and for us. And it makes us believe that they truly believe in us. One student who is part of the committee responsible for the current expansion of the center reflected and stated:

I think what makes our center exemplary is the leadership, staff, and love that's felt in the center. I think it's second to none, from my experience. They're so genuine and helpful. They really pull out the best in you, making you become a better leader and...I, like, light up when I talk about them and the center.

It was made clear that the leadership of the staff, as established by the Director made the difference for the student experience and institutional investment into the center.

**Training Ground for Future Leadership.** Study participants discussed how the BCC does a good job of connecting with students, retaining them, developing them, graduating them, and recruiting alums to work in the center. Also,

that it provides an environment that cultivates their leadership and administrative abilities. It is a training ground for future leaders. Several alumni and administrators across the campus mentioned how they increased their professional cultivation through the BCC. The Director explained his approach to building leaders through involvement with their center. He summarized:

Which is another thing I want to say about these cultural centers: they are a training ground for the future. I've helped to produce two individuals with a doctorate and one who has almost got a doctorate. One of the people that worked with me is now a vice president of student affairs at Philander Smith, and she could very well end up being the president of that school one day, and she hasn't even been there a year. So these cultural centers should be development places also. So I'm trying to develop my staff: I have at least two people here who could go and become directors at any center in this country. So I see this as another thing that exemplary BCCs must have.

One mid-level administrator mentioned her professional path and how it began in the center under the current Director:

Sure. I am an alumna of the university. I came here through a scholarship, and I was active in several organizations in the office as a student...the director of the office extended an offer to work with him once I graduated. And so I gladly accepted; worked with him. I should probably go back. I was actually part of the group where the cultural center started, or involved with the starting of the cultural center. So it was an honor to come and work with him as a staff

member. So I started like as a Program Coordinator and then became Assistant Director in both Ethnic Programs and in the cultural center, and then went on to pursue my Master's and transitioned over to our fundraising area, spent some time in financial aid, and went on to pursue my doctorate... so when we come through these walls and we get our degree, we have to make sure that our students they have the same opportunity that I have, if not a better opportunity. The BCC here had done that well.

Another staff member discussed how student leadership experiences lead to student retention on campus and helps bring alumni back. She reflected on her college and professional path through the center. She commented:

OK. Well, I started here as a student in 1997, and when I was a student I was active in the cultural center. I was in the choir, I was on the BASE steering committee, I was the first Miss Kuamka; and then, through my leadership, I was then offered a position here as a program coordinator in 2002, which I accepted. And from there, I started here as Program Coordinator in 2002. I loved it. It was a transition from being a student, and now I was an authority figure to my peers. So there were some bumps and bruises, but I made it through. And then, in 2006, I was promoted to Assistant Director, and I've been that since, for the past six years, basically running the center daily. Also, I think Doc has created a model where, you'll start to hear this, but a lot of the folks who have worked in the cultural center were former students who went through the programs, loved the programs, and somehow we ended up staying. So it's like, I know. I live this.

I knew him, so it's really easy for me to give back to students. So it's not like somebody else coming in off the street like "what do you all do?" trying to figure it out. Most times it's been someone who's been through all of the programs. And I think, for us, that's a key, or that had something to do with it because the traditions stay how they're supposed to stay... they're all mechanisms of retention.

Another student affairs administrator discussed how the center prepared her for her current job:

My role in the center was my second position in higher education. I was the first official, no maybe the second, but I came as the BASE Transitions Coordinator, Matriculation and Retention of African-American Students -- I can say that fifty times as fast. I actually implemented the first pilot program for Transitions. Transitions was a program that came up under BASE, which is Brothers and Sisters Excelling, Matriculation and Retention Program. Then Transitions came about as part of this, and this was particularly targeting first-year students, because first-year students were not thriving here on campus. But, anyway I now deal with retention students doing campus programming, so working there gave me that good foundation. And even for myself, later as I started doing research, I realized that I used the same approach and principles in regards to how I worked with students. So it was a personal story of success by working there.

Another administrator reflected on her experiences in the center and how it shaped her professional and academic paths:

I came and did my undergrad here in 2001, graduated in 2005, pursued my master's, finished that in 2006, received my doctorate in 2009; and through that time started building up networks and relationships. And one of the networks that I built was through the cultural student as a student, president of the Black Student Union. And through that experience they offered me a graduate assistantship for my master's, and I was there for my master' until one year into my doctorate program. And then I was offered a teaching assistantship in our college, which helped me out because at the time I wanted to be a professor: take a track and become president of the university.

She then discussed how her experiences in the BCC helped shape her professional return to Student Affairs.

But as I began reflecting upon my great experiences in the BCC, I realized that I missed the work that I did in the cultural center. I missed being with students who really wanted to be there. The question was "how do I be more?" and not "how do I get an A?" So there was a difference in that there was a relationship that was developed: not just one of "what can you give me?" but one of "I need you because you're asking me how was my day and no one else asks." So I was becoming this parent figure for a lot of students, a big sister; and. I missed that. But I think Doc has really been true to maintaining growing your own, to maintaining that sphere of community. And that's what makes it exemplary,

because we all can reflect from when we were there and say “this is what we did back then; it’s time to make some changes.”

So many of the participants made it evident that the BCC at University II is strategic and intentional about creating an environment for students and staff to grow personally and professionally by using their experiences with the BCC.

**Campus Collaboration.** The BCC at University II was well connected on campus. The findings suggest that whether it came from campus collaborations evident in the office programming to interview participants discussing how important connecting across campus, being connected was vital to the BCC’s ability to establish themselves and expand their impact.

The director at University II reflected on the need to connect with the university at all levels when the center first became an idea:

When the students first pushed the idea of a Black Cultural Center here, they went to the Board of Trustees’ only African American member... who initially said ‘ Hell no! I will not support it.’ They came back to me, we tweaked some things, and they went back to him. The next thing we know he was in front of the Board of trustees saying, ‘My wife and I are donating \$10,000 to establish the center.’ So the president set up a feasibility committee...and when it came down to the last vote, I will never forget, the faculty senate ended up voting yes to establish the center. So again, with the president being supportive, Dr. J being supportive of the students, we did it. But the final one, the faculty senate being



supportive, that's how we got it. See you've got to have allies...White allies.

We'd already done that and continue to do that today.

This clearly shows how campus-wide connections were used to establish the center on campus using students, faculty, and campus administration. The Director then commented on their approach to connect globally. "See effective culture centers fit into what I call our theme: connecting to campus, connecting to community, and connecting to continent...starting with Africa and beyond. This is our approach, so everything we do is based on connections" (Field Notes, February 2012).

A staff member shared how they are connected across campus through their Afrocentric Retention Model for their campus programming. She highlighted:

Across campus people continue to recognize and aspire to collaborate with us.

They know the work that we do, you know, they mention us in reports and things of that nature, particularly as it relates to our 4-tier Afrocentric based retention model we use for our student development and annual programming.

She goes on to describe their African-based Student Retention Model...

So we start off with the Akwaaba, which stands for "welcome". It is the Black student welcome experience where our freshmen are inducted into the Transitions Mentor program, and they do a semester long personal development institute. Then we move to Kuamka, which means "in the beginning." It's the rites of passage for the Transitions students, kind of congratulating them for successfully making it through the first quarter at UC. Also it's the leadership pageant for Mr. and Miss Kuamka, which is a prestigious honor. And then we

move into the Ushindi Recognition Ceremony, which means “victory;” so that’s celebrating the students’ successes, academic achievement, things of that nature...Finally we have the Tyehimba Graduation Celebration, which is the most popular. Students are excited about Tyehimba and they’ll say that’s the best thing that ever happened to them. And then we do all sorts of programs all throughout the year that connect with various offices on campus: Student Activities & Leadership, Student Government, Africana Studies Department, The Alumni Association. So either way we still get to touch the students and connect to the campus simultaneously.

It was evident that the BCC was highly connected across campus and collaborated with many entities on campus as I, the researcher, observed the Kuamka Week festivities. Participating in the program alone were several offices and administrators from across campus and the community. Some these included: various student organizations, The Office of Student Activities, Dean of Students, The Alumni Association, a local radio dj, local celebrities, and the Africana Studies department.

**Community Involvement.** Another salient theme was being engaged with the local community. The data analysis for the BCC at University II strongly emphasized the importance of being engaged in the local community and collaborating with community organizations because it can help build positive relationships between the institution and the surrounding community. As one administrator put it, “strongly well-developed BCCs that have their influence out in the community are the centers that are able to maintain their exemplary status.” This section highlights the feedback

concerning the various ways that engaging the community keeps enhances the BCCs status on campus.

One of the original students who helped establish the center at University I, discussed how important it was to involve the local community when they were fighting for their center:

We (students) were their connections to the Black community...

It just made a difference in terms of issues around sustainability, accountability and how much they would respond to the community.

And then, we were also more politically involved locally. See (our city) has a community of activists, a community that's been through some stuff relative to racism, and that was very important to us as students. We wanted to make sure the university connected with the community through the center. And it still needs to be researched and documented more.

Another campus administrator commented on using programming to collaborate with the local community. She mentioned:

So the programming becomes key: what are you doing to connect the students to the cultural center? What are you doing to connect faculty and staff to the center? What about connecting the local community? And so it's not a matter of "well, we just had a program; and you can come and watch TV," you know, that's not it. We spark some critical dialogue and experiences to make people better their best, to make people really aware of what's going on from a historical perspective, to where we are now, to where we want and hope and need and

should be. And this is where we collaborate with local community organizations to keep a pulse of the issues of the day in the Black community.

Having collaborative relationships with the surrounding community provided more social and cultural capital for the center and provided a larger context for the BCCs to thrive. This also improved the visibility of the centers and the university as a whole.

**Alumni Participation.** Active alumni participation was another theme that developed as an important and integral factor to the BCC at University II. They were able to cultivate efforts that engage alumni for their support through financial, professional, and academic initiatives.

For example, at University II, there are several alumni events that take place, particularly during their Annual Kuamka Week. Alumni hold a professional development seminars and a reception for the undergraduates during the week and throughout the year. The Black Alumni Association also awards approximately \$50,000 in scholarships to students in need of financial assistance at their annual Mr. and Mrs. Kuamka Pageant and Ball. The Director elaborated:

So... I think our programming and our connection with our Alumni Association shows you how we collaborate with the alumni and how that helps build respect for us on campus. It is important that we continue to build those bridges between our students and alumni because it shows the university that we know how maintain and cultivate the resources that we have. That's less work on the institution's end because they see us as a unit that can sustain ourselves with our own resources.

Another alumnus and campus administrator at University II discussed how important it is for the alumni to give back and connect with their center. She expounded:

But then also, because I'm in development and fundraising, we realized that as we come through this institution as undergraduate students, what we see is provided not only from the university, but from donors, alumni, who have helped to make our experience possible through the BCC here. And so when we come through these walls and we get our degree, we can't just say 'I'm out of here.' There are four thousand other Black alums like me, and so I have to make sure that they have the same opportunity that I had, if not a better opportunity. And so I want to see all of the people that have come through the cultural center walls making contributions, so that if the university doesn't have the two million dollars to build a new center... well, guess what, we have it! We're employed. When spider webs unite they can tie up lion, so why can't we make those contributions and help enhance what we have? And we do!

This same administrator participated in the Kuamka Ball event and presented a \$50,000 scholarship to an African American sophomore on behalf of the Black Alumni Association. So the alumni engagement piece appears to be a vital part of the center's presence and impact on campus.

**Student Engagement.** Another prevalent theme was student engagement and action. This was a critical piece of how the BCC was established and how it continues to expand on campus. The students had a history of taking ownership and being active in the development and expansion of their BCC.

The students at University II were also the highly involved in their center's establishment. One of the original students reflected on they were able to engage with campus administration in an active yet savvy way. She recalled:

I don't remember the initial response, but I don't recall students being shut down. Our students had a very uncanny way of interacting with our administrators. Like I said, you know, they were not confrontational in order to get results, but they were smooth operators. I mean...you know the book *The Art of War*? They knew the art of diplomacy, the art of negotiation, the art of persuasion, the art of communication.

One male student leader expressed how his involvement in the center impacted his college experience:

Oh, man! Had it not been for the center I wouldn't have had such an enriching experience of an African-American student at a predominantly white institution, because this is basically your home away from home. You have people that look like you, so it's easier to identify with them. And typically they're able to identify with some of the struggles that you may run into as being a student, whether it be financially, whether it be trying to become integrated with the campus community, getting you just connected with people in general.

The students at University II are currently at the forefront of another movement on their campus to expand their center. A female student leader explained:

I'm actually one of the key players, I guess, in the call to action now. A couple of other students and myself met some prominent leaders on this campus to discuss

the future, the longevity of the (center) as well as what we can do now to mitigate some of the facility ruin that has happened. Whether it's just from not being as visible on campus, issues within our facility: things that we can do now to directly effect, we want to make sure we have it at the forefront. The call to action is just to make sure that this center is here to last for years to come. Right now we're taking baby steps just to make sure that in the next couple years those improvements are implemented for students now and those to come.

The current president of the United Black Students Association explained his role in leading the current call to action movement to expand the BCC at University II:

Originally when I became president of the United Black Students' Association back in June, before the school let out, I set out to create a plan for the UBSA to really work towards getting the center in the condition that it needs to be. When I first did that even some Black students were like "what are you doing? This is crazy. Shouldn't we be picking a time on this? Why are you going right into this immediately?" I was like "we've got to immediately do this." I had received some information over the summer that the retention rate for Black students was lower, and it had gotten lower again to eight percent. But over the summer the Vice President of Student Affairs, called a meeting about it. So with fifty-sixty people in his room, and he wanted to just ask us questions, and then he also wanted to let us know what they were doing to get that changed.

The BCC at University II is very connected to their students and does an impressive job of staying in tune to their needs while empowering them to use their voices to build a

legacy on campus through the BCC. This in turn allows the students to create a climate that supports their development. This was evident in the overwhelming student energy and participation that I noticed while observing the many activities during their Kuamka Week activities. Students were at the forefront of the planning and implementation of most the events. Their energy was excited and appreciative. I could tell that the students were truly engaged with the staff of the center and this created an environment where students felt a part of the university.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a summary of the findings related to RQ1 that looks at the factors associated with the exemplary BCC at University II. The major findings of this site included several salient themes that can help us understand the characteristics of this particular exemplary BCC. These included: a) Familial Environment: Home Away From Home, b) Authentic Leadership, c) Training Ground for Future Leadership, d). Campus Collaboration, e) Community Involvement; f) Alumni Participation, and g) Student Engagement.

While others themes were established, these were most significant in understanding how the center was able to establish, maintain, and even expand its presence and impact on campus. The center at University II has truly captured and uniquely personified the spirit of community on campus with the students, staff, and alumni through its programming and campus connections. While the physical center is lacking in distinction and utility, the unit is in the planning stages of expanding the



center through major renovations. The BCC personifies the notion of overcoming the liabilities of their physical space to continue impacting the campus.

## Chapter 6

### CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

As mentioned earlier a variety of participants and data were used in this study, offering different experiences with the BCC on each particular campus. Due the uniqueness of each campus, it is not surprising that differences emerged. At the same time, however, there were similarities between the centers as well. Despite institutional and culture center differences, the data suggests several common themes that described how these exemplary centers are able to survive, thrive, and expand. In this chapter, I will respond to the findings of the study for RQ2 and RQ3. These questions intend whether exemplary factors reach across both institutions in commonalities and distinctions, along with addressing the theoretical framework of institutionalization.

Table 1 represents a visualization of the individual themes identified at each university and provides the foundation for the cross case analysis. The table shows that there were similarities and slight differences in themes between institutions.

<b>Table 1</b>	
<b>Exemplary BCCs: Major Theme Comparisons</b>	
<u>University I: Major Themes</u>	<u>University II- Major Themes</u>
• Stable Leadership	• Authentic Leadership
• Political Leverage Based on Fear and Accountability	• Familial Environment: Home Away From Home
• Collaboration with Academic Affairs	• Campus Collaboration
• Aligning with the University's goals	• Training Ground for Future Leadership
• Community Engagement	• Community Involvement
• Student Engagement	• Student Engagement
• Alumni Support	• Alumni Participation
• Campus Connections	
<b>Table 1</b>	

### Common Factors of Exemplary Status

A number of overall themes emerged to describe how these exemplary centers are able to survive, thrive, and expand across institutions. Both centers presented various actions, approaches, and philosophies on how they maintain their exemplary status. Upon reviewing the individual themes at each site, similarities were noted for each institution. The most salient themes were: a) Leadership & Legacy Make the Difference,

b) Building Campus Connections at All Levels, c) Remaining Relevant and Advancing the Institution, d) Community Engagement and Collaboration, e). Student Ownership and a “Call to Action”, and f) Alumni Engagement and Involvement. Each major theme will be described and used to demonstrate various ways in which the participants voiced statements relative to the leading theme.

### **Leadership and Legacy Make the Difference**

The leadership theme was prevalent at both centers, and the cross-analysis highlighted the various layers of leadership that are required to establish and maintain an exemplary BCC. At both centers, many described the importance of the role of leadership in their exemplary centers, particularly in how it empowered and encouraged students who ultimately advocated for the BCC. This also included the importance of leadership being able to navigate the institutional politics and being able to connect the campus to the community. Overall, this theme emerges from the individual leadership themes at each site and operationalizes leadership in terms of having a legacy of service in the center, on campus, and in the community. As the participants were interviewed, many of them commented on the overall importance of leadership, particularly as it related to having a vision, being engaging, leveraging multiple agendas, and having a leadership legacy of service that garners respect.

**A campus leader(s) who is visionary and engaging.** Participants often described one leader or a set of individuals on or across campus who were instrumental in pushing the BCCs agenda forward by navigating the political cultures of the institutions. Often words like strategic, adaptable, engaging, and visionary were used to

describe leaders involved in the establishment and current status of the centers. At University I, one administrator described the criticality of leadership in their exemplary center.

Leadership is critical. And when you talk about exemplary BCCs, leadership is a key element. It's the commitment of leadership to have it. It's the commitment of leadership to staff it, and it's not just finding any Joe Schmoe off the street who has a degree; but it has to be somebody who is passionate and committed for the cause. It has to be someone who is visionary because you will have, unfortunately in some centers, limited resources. But you have to learn how to collaborate. You have to learn how to innovate and engage the campus. You have to learn how to motivate and get other people connected, involved, and excited so that is can better than it's circumstance.

One student at University I commented on the passion of the staff and leadership,

I think it's the passion and vision behind the leadership and the staff members that are connected to the center. Every year you hear people talk about budget cuts; but no matter how low the budget may get, you never see the center scale back on their activity or the quality of programming presented to the students. So I think it's the passion that makes it exemplary, and the vision. Although we may not have an extenuating budget, the vision is not paralyzed by the amount of money that we have. So as long as there is a vision and it's something that we really want, we're going to go out and find those resources and find those people that are passionate about making that program the best program that it can be.

One alumni/administrator at University II reflected on the importance of leadership empowering the students. She summarized:

But a lot of that goes to Dr. E. and his voice behind that movement, behind the students. Oftentimes, as administrators, we have to push our students to do things because this is our livelihood. So we came knocking on the door. But he really motivated students to say “this is your fight, so fight it.” And I think that’s how the center came to be. He, along with other students, really said this is a fight, because this is bigger than us.

The director of the center at University II was highly visible and actively engaged with the center’s programs and events during my visit. He appeared to represent a sagacious father-figure to the students, particularly during the Kuamka Ball rite of passage ceremony (Field Notes, February 2012).

Both centers have histories that started with Black student protests, and immersed in those student demands and protests were campus leaders who empowered and encouraged the students to navigate the system. University I is currently named after one visionary leader who was the VP of Student Affairs and fought for the expansion of its center in the early 1990s. During an interview, this administrator remembers his role in the expansion of the center and recalled:

Dr. (D) was the man. When he came in the room, people stopped and listened. He saw the center for where it was and didn’t apologize for using his resources to advocate for it. You know there are some Black administrators who are in these positions for their own professional gain, you know the next job. But he

wasn't like that; he had a vision, shared with the students and made it happen.

This amazing center is reflection of the vision he set forth.

The current director at University II was instrumental in the establishment of the center and is still impacting the center...one staff member at the center commented on his role in helping establish the center. She said:

A few things come to mind. I think one, our director. He is rooted in Blackness, loves students, and is well respected, I'd say in the nation, amongst other cultural centers and professionals. So I think his vision and his energy are very instrumental in our maintaining who we are.

Participants at both sites spoke to the directors' ability to engage the campus by providing a vision for their BCC that students, faculty, and the community supported. This was also prevalent in the historical documents at each site. They both have a history of leadership that was committed and clear on their mission and engaged the campus and community. This was also evident during the observations where both leaders garnered respect from students, faculty, staff, and community leaders. The findings clearly suggest that having a leader with vision and is actively engaged on the campus is a key characteristic and intangible evidence marker of both exemplary BCCs.

**Leadership that leverages multiple stakeholders: Students, campus administrators, and local community.** Upon analyzing how the leaders of each center navigated historically and currently, leadership centered on leveraging multiple agendas from stakeholders. Many discussed campus administrators and directors who

were able to help establish and maintain their centers by engaging the agendas and needs of students, institutional leaders, and the local community.

University II director discussed how his role in leveraging multiple stakeholders helped the students acquire the BCC on their campus.

I'm saying I've been here since 1972. I think we're far ahead of other institutions because of the blatant racism that existed here... was so obvious that we had already fought it. We had some champions; we had different people who were dealing with the system from within, like Linda B. and Melvin P. And I will even include myself in that group, lil ol me! We were not afraid of White folks and we knew how to bring them to the table. That's key, because within these campuses you got to have White allies.

He goes on to discuss his role in empowering the students to establish a Black Cultural Center back in the late 1980s.

And I was able to mentor our students in the early 90s when they presented a request to the university for a BCC. So the way they did it was...they did not threaten the university with unrest and protest. See when you deal with White supremacy you have to know how to navigate the system. So these students were clean-cut bowtie wearing brothers and sisters who were integrated into the PWI, but they had a sense of consciousness even though they wanted to be in the White man's world. So it was really about leveraging the student's approach to dealing with the university administration that would ultimately affect the local community of Black folks here in the city.



At University I, during an interview, the chair of the Africana Studies Department described how leadership and the community are interdependent and important.

But the reality is many of the decisions up until recently, have been based on the fear of community rebellion since our school is right in the Black neighborhood. So it's no irony that the first director was a brother...who was a city councilman. Now he wasn't city councilman back when he was director, but he was a community-engaged activist...So you have influential community people who, at the pull of any dial could deliver community presence. And so with that fear presidents over the years have always maintained that we need to pacify. And within that pacification you have visionary leaders who are able to do some stuff, so you partner with the community. So although we work for the man, per se, we spread the resources around so students on campus and the local community. And when we do this, the campus leadership as a whole looks good, and good directors know how to influence these three areas effectively.

At University II, a past student leader commented on the leadership of the executive/staff in how they engage students (stakeholders) and their parents.

She (Assistant Director) has been there for ten years now, something like that; and the leadership that she's given other African-American women...and even with her work with the men, is incredible. It's something that ...people from the community send their children here because they trust her, like I met you and you told me you would take care of my child. And that's hard with first-

generation students. Parents want to make sure my baby's ok. So that leadership: it's really bar-none.

Another student at University II talked about the vision of the center and how the Director and staff connect that vision to the students passionately:

I think it's the passion behind the staff members that are connected to the center. Every year you hear people talk about budget cuts; but no matter how low the budget may get, you never see the center scale back on their activity or the quality of programming presented to the students. So I think it's the passion that makes it exemplary, and the vision. Although we may not have an extenuating budget, the vision is not paralyzed by the amount of money that we have. So as long as there is a vision and it's something that we really want, we're going to go out and find those resources and find those people that are passionate about making that program the best program that it can be.

These example findings suggest that there should be a cohort of people in leadership positions, particularly the Director, who focus on leveraging the agendas multiple agendas: campus administration, student needs, and local community. Being able to maintain positive relationships in all three areas and using those agendas to benefit the centers are what have made both centers in the study successful.

**Establishing a Leadership Legacy that Garners Respect.** Another part of the leadership theme that developed was the notion of having a living legacy to build respect and support on campus and in the local community. The data showed that both

centers have someone in a leadership position that had profound impact on the campus and community and used that influence to build the impact of the center. An administrator at University I explained how a leader with positive legacy connects the center to campus and the community.

If you look at Harvard's model: their center is named after W. E. B. Dubois.

The center here is named after (Bob's) father. Now there's an intimacy there in terms of people who are still around who were touched by his father.

So whereas, Dubois is this great thinker who's been dead for many years now...people still resonate with his writings and his thinking. Similarly this center is named after someone who was a mentor to many of the leaders in the community and on campus. So there's a connectivity that makes it more intimate. That creates a living legacy that the campus and community want to buy into because they realize his impact. And so there's a huge value currency and intimate respect for this center...So to get rid of this center, would mean to get rid of that legacy and influence. And that just won't happen here.

Bob talked about the legacy of his dad's leadership and how it impacted the BCC at University I:

Part of the reason why the center was named after my dad was because when he was here as Vice President of Student Affairs the center reported to him. And he was very big on making sure that the center had its resources that it needed to be successful. Primarily under his leadership...he made sure that the university

commitment continued to advance as time went on, as needs went on, as demands began to grow. It's really fortunate that he did do those sorts of things because as the university's approach shifted from a social attentiveness to student needs to a great practical and business attentive model...it was better to have established yourself at a certain level and a certain standard. So he and the leadership at the time really did an excellent job to push to get the budget and resources for the center.

At University II the leadership legacy is still present as their founding Director is still supervising the center. A staff member who was one of the original students instrumental in establishing the center, reflects on its director's legacy of leadership:

He has a longstanding legacy here as an administrator and leader. And it is because of his history here that the students who first saw the BCC at Vanderbilt on a college tour trip that he organized. And he has been a mentor, father figure, and sounding board to so many students. He empowered us and gave us the tools to navigate the system when we first started the journey of establishing the center. He guided us on who to meet with, what points to make etc. The fact that he is still here is a testament to that. He is known around the nation and Africa. Go to Ghana, just mention our city, I guarantee you will run into someone who knows him. He was doing Black Male Think Tanks and other major conference programs before anyone else was. I know of fourteen think tanks alone that he spearheaded...and he is responsible for the Afrocentric model that we use here in the center.

Again the legacy of leadership and respect makes appeared to be a major factor in the exemplary status of the center. Having leadership in place, historically and present-day, who are visionary and engaging make the difference. There was a strong sense of appreciation, respect, and admiration for the legacy of leadership at both centers. This made the environment more receptive to the needs of the Black students and leaders of the BCC and allowed the leadership to become savvy in leveraging the agendas and needs of the students, the campus administrators, and the local community surrounding the campus.

### **Building Campus Connections at All Levels**

Many participants mentioned how important relationships were in maintaining and expanding the status and impact of both centers. They mentioned the importance of being politically engaged with administrators at various levels and departments. What stood out the most was their commitment to this and their perceptions that they must continuously take the initiative to connect themselves to campus. It suggests an active pursuit, not a passive presence when building connections on campus.

The director of the BCC at University I talked about the strategic connections that he continues to cultivate.

The board of trustees has held meetings in our building. Other departments now hold meetings and classes in our building; develop partnerships with us on certain events and activities...So now the center has really moved out into the university environment in a comprehensive way. As director I saw that as a critical piece of our future...that people around the university needed to think

about the center whenever those came issues up that were pertinent to African Americans. What I can say is that I think we're more stable than the average center because of the relationships developed and maintaining them. And so it requires constant nurturing, it requires constant attention, it requires constant engagement, so that as people think about the advancement they think about the BCC here.

He even took it one step further and discussed building quality connections with other campuses, "...we're really trying to look at our relationships with other campuses as well and trying to find ways to support other cultural center as well as them supporting us."

At University II, a mid-level administrator who was also a part of the student group responsible for establishing the BCC at University II shared the same sentiment when she stated:

The students were able to really build a case for why a center should be here. They were definitely the biggest part. But I was going to say the other thing that helped was that we had individuals in our administration who were racially sensitive and had some level of consciousness. And I think that was key. Having those connections with administrations at all levels really helped us move forward.

**Visibility is Essential.** Visibility was also important when talking about connecting at all levels. This meant actively sending direct and indirect messages about the center that give it a positive presence and brand on campus. Being visible on

campus and in the community was pertinent to building connections and garnering support for the centers. High visibility keeps the BCC at the forefront of campus culture.

For example at University II, a student talked about her role as an ambassador for the center. She smiled as she said,

We are ambassadors for the center, so we speak on behalf of the center at various events. If there's ever different events on campus when they're taking pictures, writing for the center's newsletters, and just really making sure that the center has a prominent and positive voice on this campus.

At University I, a campus administrator emphasized the importance of keeping the name of their center alive to ensure campus visibility:

But to get rid of the African-American Institute means that you've got to get rid of the name, which ain't happening in this city, you see what I'm saying? And that's the piece how we build our stuff. So his logo and the name is so important that we plastered it all over the spot. You know, students call it "the 'Tute," and I'm almost tempted to tell them to stop doing that. I understand why we do that but for me, when I refer to the institute, I call it by the official name, because branding and marketing is everything.

At University I, a staff member discussed creating intentional branding messages that speak for the center through other campus administrators' messages:

For example, the president messed up a couple of weeks ago by misquoting a statistic about the rise in students of color, particularly Black students of color.

They're trying to fix that misquote because the president said it. So I believe that the best way that we can spread what we do and to create unintentional ambassadors is to have our sound- bytes so poignant and so prophetic that we say them with passion. And when the person in the Provost's office or Presidential office find themselves with their back against the wall, they're going to quote us. And when they quote us, because they are who they are, the newspaper person will write it down. And then when it gets captured by them, whether they cite me or not, not it becomes law. So I can say stuff to the point where it's being quoted, and the folks upstairs know my vision, then I let them take the credit for coming up with the brilliant idea. Either way, our center and its message is out there and we have credibility.

### **Remaining Relevant and Advancing the Institution**

Both centers strive to maintain a relevant presence on campus. Interviewees at both campuses discussed how they were able to keep their center thriving on campus through remaining relevant and advancing the institution. This theme accounted for how the centers continue to expand their presence and impact on the campus. This theme represents an ideological belief and approach that the centers must continue to actively strive for growth while being an asset to the institution. Both centers were intentional about linking their goals with the university's goals. A staff member at University I admitted,

We are actually active in conversations with higher administration, sharing our dreams and sharing our vision to be a degree-bearing unit within the center, then



have the cultural aspect within the center and also have the community based relationship within the center so that you have this full on three-pronged, four-pronged approach. So we're not talking about budget cuts...we're talking about building and growing. So our conversation is pushing the university to say 'uh-oh we've got to rethink this.

The director at University I echoed the theme:

We are establishing relationships here on campus where we are seen as a peer, as opposed to just a bunch of guys across the street that are providing a service. And my goal is to build up those pieces to make sure that as the university goes, we go. As the academic success of university goes, we're an integral part. And how do we do that? Look at our MLK Minority Fellowship Program. We work with Financial Aid and provide fellowship to African American graduate students. This is recruitment and retention. This helps the university to move forward.

At University II, an administrator commented on their center continuing to evolve while educating others:

Definitely evolution is important, and so is innovation, but really keeping the core purpose; and with here it's about enlightenment, not only of the African experience and the African Diaspora but also being able to embrace folks from other cultures to come in and to learn. So it doesn't exist to exclude other opportunity and experience, but so that everyone can have a full experience and

learn about it. And that's one of the key issues that I don't think people really, really get.

She also talked about collaborating with the BCC to provide scholarship money to minority students is a great way that they show the university their value. She said, "For instance we give away thousands of dollars in scholarship with the BCC here every year, when the university sees that, they can only support it, not reject it. That's what it's about."

One past student and administrator talked about staying in the fight to maintain the center's status. "We have some time. But by that that time we need to continue to position ourselves. All cultural centers need to position themselves to be ready for that fight." This represents the essence of this theme. Both centers were clear in their stance on remaining active and relevant to position themselves to move forward with the institution...to continue thriving and growing, not just surviving. This takes an active and strategic effort.

### **Local Community Engagement & Collaboration**

Both centers strongly emphasized the importance of being engaged in the local community and collaborating with community organizations and leaders to build a positive relationship between the institution and the community that surrounds it.

The director at University II talked about the importance of having respect from the local community.

I think our respect from the community is what makes the difference also. Let me say this about effective culture centers. They fit into what I feel our theme is

about: connecting campus, community and continent...We do student service in the community. We are actually getting ready now to do a Black male initiative with young brothers in the local community. I'm going to tell you this, no Black cultural center should exist without having community outreach. If it doesn't have community outreach, it's not doing its job.

A University I administrator shared in this sentiment in talking about using the local community as leverage.

So this campus, about, I would say one third is surrounded by projects and Black folks. So this person starts a church and don't have space, come on over to the center. If you have a program for Black boys, trying to invest in the community and train young men to be leaders, let's do it at the center. If you have a community organization trying to do a banquet or doing a fundraiser and they don't have the space or they're going to lose all of their money in order to rent space, come on over to the center. So our center created those unique community collaborative partnerships, which nobody else around was doing at the time which made our school Grand Central Station for a lot of Black activity, which made the university look good. That has been a strength of the center because you had a political covering based on the accessibility of "dem darkies' across the street.

Both centers were well connected with the surrounding local communities which reflected a large part of the African American student population on campus.

Partnering with the local community broadened the African American context on

campus and created a better environment for the university to connect with leadership and resources off campus

### **Ownership and a Spirit of “Call to Action” from Students**

One prevalent theme that was consistent across both centers was the presence of student engagement and action. This was a critical piece of how both centers were established and continues to expand on their respective campuses. The students at both institutions had a history of taking ownership and being active in the development and expansion of their BCCs. The students were the foundation of the movements on both campuses. The director at University I recalled:

When the students were interested in making the BCC happen, it was partially a reaction to Dr. King’s death, partially to feelings of isolation, partially reaction to the desire to create some sense of community for themselves, partially a reaction to wanting to feel valued by the university and valued by the administration; partially reaction to wanting to create some semblance of stability in an effort to advocate for whatever the students’ needs were at that time. But what was also clear in those conversations was that not everybody was on the same page when all that happened, but they students were committed to having a place for them to be affirmed and supported.

The students at University II were also the highly involved in their center’s establishment. One of the original students reflected on how they were able to engage with campus administration in an active yet savvy way.

Yes, and that's not to say that they weren't militant because there were definitely those in the group who were militant, because, at the same time, we were trying to get the university to divest from apartheid in South Africa. So there was the whole movement going on. We had the programs and seminars where students would dress in black, paint their faces red, black and green...But at the same time, that was us making a statement. It wasn't necessarily "I'm talking to the president disrespectfully and I've got my hat tilted to the side and my fist is pumped." Some students did do that, but they were kind of marginalized to be able to have just a straight-faced, critical dialogue. But a majority of the students at the forefront of the movement were very savvy in engaging campus administration.

In contrast, the students at University I were very active and vocal during the second phase of protests of the early 2000s. They presented more demands and one administrator reflected on their public outcry. He remembered:

There was a big demonstration in front of the old center and the president came during the student protests and I remember it like it was yesterday. He came for a meeting to discuss their demands. I remember they started chasing him. They (students) chased him down the street. He jumped into one of the campus police cars, and they blocked up Huntington Avenue, where the trolley tracks began....So there was this crazy scene.

The protests eventually led to numerous meetings where a happy medium was finally reached. This is when the current BCC at University II began its expansion.

The current president of the United Black Students Association explained his role in leading the current call to action movement to expand the BCC at University II:

It was a great start, but I felt like it shouldn't have gotten to there, but it took UBSA to raise awareness about getting our center upgraded. The VP called me and wanted to meet because he initially found out because the information got leaked. I got my Executive board together and they ended up sending our concerns to people, and those people started sending it to people, and then it got on Twitter and Facebook and it just went on and on. It was just in January that UBSA did the Call to Action video. We called the university out on it, like "y'all have to fix this." We have received great support from that and...they're trying to really change the Black Culture Center and they want it to be on the campus. They want it to look like the other parts of the university. It shouldn't have taken for the Black Student Union to say stuff about this. They should have noticed it. But if it takes us to talk about it for them to change it, then so be it.

Having student ownership was a critical piece to the establishment and impact of these exemplary BCCs. Historically, student engagement was paramount when the centers were established. Student protests and efforts led to both campuses responding with a BCC on the campus. The Black student body at both schools was also instrumental in involving the local community in building a center that connected the campus to the community. Upon further review of the observations from this study it is evident that the students have been at the forefront of building both centers, thus expanding the centers' impact on both campuses. The BCC at University I was recently renovated and

expanded in 2004 as a result of students engaging the administration and demanding more support. At University II, they are now preparing to renovate their center because of the current “call to action” campaign that the students are facilitating with the Dean of Students. Observations at both centers affirmed that students were the center of everything in the center: resources, staffing, program implementation etc. Findings clearly suggest brought awareness and get involved with their campus environment. At both centers, student engagement and a call to action from the university students made the difference in both centers current operation and expansion.

### **Alumni Engagement and Involvement**

Both centers were effective in engaging and sustaining quality alumni resources and relationships through the BCC. Alumni engagement and involvement with the BCC showed the university that these centers were able to build fiscal, political, and social capital that helps sustain and enhance the institution’s worth.

The director at University I discussed how his BCC continues to cultivate Black alumni relationships:

We’ve really made a concerted effort under my tenure to bring the alumni back into the university. So I’ve traveled across the country a few times to meet with alumni, and they were more than willing to share their experiences of being a student here and giving back. One of the former Black Board of Trustees member who’s now a board of trustees emeritus - he himself... has, over time, created a nest egg of about \$450,000, for which we are able to draw the interest off of to use as we see fit. He wants it all to be committed to our center. So with

that kind of support and moving in that direction we're raising good money for us in the future. I think that's going to really begin to set us apart, if we can continue that trend of donated resources.

At University II, the alumni come back and work for the center to keep the connections with the students. One student explained:

The people that are employed there are, the majority of them, are alums except for one, and were active on campus, that made changes on campus, that fought for students who look just like me. So they understand and can relate, which a lot of centers don't have, because people do want to bring in new people. But I think Dr. A. has really been true to maintaining growing your own, to maintaining that sphere. And that's what makes it exemplary, because we all can reflect from when we were there and say this is what we did back then; it's time to make some changes.

Findings in this study show that another characteristic of the exemplary centers in this study includes having a consistent relationship and active engagement with alumni.

The consistent relationship with and active engagement of the alumni with these centers allowed them to build fiscal resources and connect the generations of Black alumni with African American students. It also provides opportunities for the centers to build their resources from within.



### **Additional Characteristics From Observation: Exemplary BCCs**

It also important to note some additional characteristics that provide more context to how both BCCs are able to survive, thrive, and expand.

#### **Cultural Programming**

A shared similarity across both centers was the type of campus programming that each center produced. Both centers presented programming that was designed to promote, educate, and empower the surrounding community about the African American experience locally and across the African Diaspora. The centers represented the majority of the high quality African American programming on their respective campuses and it was typically geared towards connecting students to the facility and filling a much needed gap for Black student needs that were absent from main campus events. They were the hub for African American life on campus.

One of the most significant programs hosted by both BCCs was the peer mentoring initiative. These peer mentoring programs were put in place to help the incoming freshman acclimate to the university and connect with the campus via their mentor. Through this program they learned about the resources on campus, as well as the resources made available to them through the BCC. Other programs included: Welcome Week Orientations, Black Recognition ceremonies, Black publications, Martin Luther King Jr. Celebrations, Kwanzaa & cultural celebrations, Gospel Choirs, Black History Month events, and Black Faculty Development. There was also a strong presence of partnerships between the BCC and Black student organizations on campus.

The data in this study abundantly shows the programming of these centers to be intentional and impactful to the campus and local communities.

### **Positive Interactions with Staff**

As the students and alumni discussed their experiences with the center on their campus, they reported positive interactions with the staff and they were clear about how these interactions shaped their experiences in the center. The staff made them feel included, empowered, and gave them a sense of family and a home away from home. The BCC staff members also were instrumental in providing a positive environment everyone. Both centers have a director who is a passionate advocate that is knowledgeable about the history and impact of their center on the campus and the African Diaspora globally. Particularly, the Director played a key role in how people perceived and engaged the center. The Director set the tone for the rest of the staff by being approachable, available, pleasant, and supportive. They also appreciated the Director for being an advocate for the students and encouraging the staff to do the same.

### **Involvement and Connection Within the Center**

All of the participants of this study clearly expressed how their involvement with the center was important to them. Involvement took on many different meanings and roles. Some were students actively involved in the programming of the center. Others were current staff in the center. Many of the administrators interviewed were alumni of the institution and were highly involved with the center as undergraduates. Other administrators were collaborating with the centers on committees, campus initiatives,

and/or local activities. They all viewed their center as the center of African American culture on campus and that represented their identity as an African American, and this cultivated their involvement. Both centers were avid in cultivating future leaders by involving alumni in their agenda.

### **Differences in Heritage, Organization, and Facility**

The BCCs represented in this study were unique in their own way. While both centers met all of the evidence marker criteria as identified by the Association of Black Cultural Centers Board of Trustees, each center had a stronger accent on certain areas. This section will describe the major differences among the BCCs in this study that shape their ability to maintain itself in its own unique way. These differences provide more context to RQ2 by comparing and contrasting shared characteristics.

History was a major factor of degree difference. Both centers stemmed from Black student protests, but historically University I has had several campus locations for its facility since it opened its doors in 1968. University II didn't officially open its doors until the early 1990s, even though Black student protest started back in the 1960s. Thus, University I has been present longer on its campus for forty years, as compared to University II who just celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. University II has only had one location and is preparing to expand their center, which is not as elaborate as University I. Both institutions have their own significant trajectories of events that led to their current status. Nevertheless, they both have significant historical beginnings stemming from the Black Student Movement era.

While they both share in the same range of annual operating budgets, it is interesting to note that the organization of each center is quite different. Both centers are housed in a Student Affairs unit and report to upper level administration, but their organizational structures are somewhat different. University I has a staff of seven including the Director, and uses a three-prong business structure similar to many corporations. (Field Notes, December 2011). This organizational structure has a position that focuses on the external progress of the organization (Assistant Director of Outreach and Communication), a position that focuses on the internal development and progress of the organization (Assistant Director of Student Development and Scholars Program), and someone positioned who focuses on shaping the future trajectory of the organization (Assistant Director of Academic Advancement and Research). All three Assistant Directors report to the Director of the center and have direct reports of their own. University II has different organizational set up. The Director is responsible for the management of BCC as well as a separate Ethnic Programs Office. There is an Associate Director that runs the Ethnic Programs office and an Assistant Director that responsible for the management and upkeep of the BCC. There are three Program Coordinators that report to the Assistant Director of the BCC at University II. All three Program Coordinators deal with various aspects of the student development programs that take place within the office. These were evidence markers that stood out with various levels of effect. At University I, the African Studies department is a direct outcome of the BCC. It was born out of the center. The both work interdependently with an academic research agenda with Black faculty and students. University II

doesn't have this type of relationships and are currently working to build it with their African Studies department. This difference in organization shows how they both are exemplary but still unique.

Both campuses boast impressive student engagement and ownership. However, University II students appear to operate in a less assertive "in your face" approach to getting things done as opposed to University I where public and aggressive outcry create an environment where the university responds quickly. So while they are somewhat different in how they function, both BCCS still possessed an amazing presence of student impact and engagement. As it relates to other differences, University I had a more extensive academic support unit that included tutoring, supplemental instruction, and classroom space as compared to University II. Overall, these differences are interesting to note in that they show how both centers share exemplary status in many characteristics, but they are still unique in their way...through heritage, organization, and facility. Thus, in spite of these differences they have an amazing presence and student impact on campus, which shapes their exemplary status.

### **Institutionalization**

In response to research question 3, the findings of this study suggest that institutionalization is a common factor in the exemplary status of the centers. This section will apply each phase to the centers in this study.

Zucker and Tolbert's (1999) explanation of Institutionalization of centers is used for this study and posits that it refers to habitualized acts within systems that happen at

varying levels through a set of three sequential and separate phases. It starts with Habitualization (Phase 1), which involves the development of new structural arrangements in response to a specific organizational problem or set of problems. Both centers meet these criteria seamlessly, as they are both outcomes of Black student outcries on their campuses demanding inclusive environments and support systems to ensure Black student retention. In response to these student protests, both institutions responded with the establishment of Black Cultural Centers.

Also classified as the pre-Institutionalization stage, Zucker and Tolbert (1999) suggested that the Habitualization phase is where an organization responds with formalized new structures or changes to those problems, but they tend to be relatively temporary, often lasting only for the length of leadership's tenure. Both centers successfully transcended this phase, as student protests led to the establishment of a BCC. Even though University I seemed to have expanded their center to various locations over time and University II is preparing to expand its center, they both have been able to remain committed to their mission and garner, maintain, and expand their impact on campus.

Objectification (Phase 2) moves towards a more permanent and widespread status. It involves the development of some degree of social consensus among the organizational decision-makers focusing on the value of a new structure. Upon reviewing documents at both centers, it is evident that both institutions met this phase by gaining social consensus on campus to establish their centers. This included getting support from the university president, board of trustees, local community, student

government, faculty senate, and students. Historically both centers were able to use these outlets to get support for their Black Cultural Center. The findings suggest that University I has successfully completed this phase because they were able to rally the institution back in the early 2000s to expand their center. This led to building of their current facility, which is impressively situated on campus and has extensive programs, resources, and collaborations across campus. They are at the same level of campus impact and student engagement as University I. Thus both centers have successfully completed this phase when looking at overall ability to thrive, survive, and maintain a permanent status.

Sedimentation (Phase 3) involves full Institutionalization because it includes complete diffusion of new structures across the group and has historical continuity over a lengthy period of time. It is evidenced in both BCCs by the combined effects of relatively low resistance by opposing groups, continued cultural support, promotion by advocacy groups, and positive correlations with desired outcomes. As both entities are thriving units on their respective campuses, both centers meet this phase.

When applying the various phases of Institutionalization to both centers, the data would suggest that both centers appear to be fully institutionalized and meet the criteria for Phase 3 in terms of campus connection, support, impact. What is interesting is that participants at both centers clearly expressed their comfort in knowing that they are not under threat of closing down or changing their mission, particularly as expressed by the upper-level administrators interviewed. Nevertheless, many who work within the center or collaboratively across campuses also expressed that they still

have a slight uncertainty about their existence. They indicated they use this uncertainty as motivation to maintain their impact and presence on their campuses at all levels to ensure their permanent existence on campus. They felt that even though they are institutionalized, they still feel the need to remain committed to staying ahead of the “institutional curve” to ensure their relevance. This was an interesting and unexpected finding.

### **Evidence Markers**

Given the rich findings of this study, there were several similarities and differences that emerged across each center. Because of the uniqueness of each center, it is understandable that differences were present. Despite institutional and culture center differences, data suggest findings that were similar in nature across campuses. The following is a discussion of the evidence markers, major exemplary themes, and similarities and differences at each center.

The two centers for this study were selected because of their exemplary status as set by Board of Trustees of the Association of Black Cultural Centers (ABCC). The Board identified certain evidence markers that they have deemed characteristic of exemplary BCCs. According to the ABCC Board of Trustees panel of experts, a BCC can be considered exemplary if it meets certain criteria as noted in Table 2. These markers serve as the foundational factors that identify exemplary Black Cultural Centers. Both centers met all of these criteria and serve as qualitative evidence of exemplary status in terms of the ABCC criteria.



**Table 2****Association of Black Cultural Centers: Evidence Marker Checklist**

	<b>UNIVERSITY I</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY II</b>
1. Is a member of and actively attends the national conference of the Association of Black Culture Centers (ABCC) or a national association related to diversity awareness and issues in higher education	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
2. Has significant historical beginnings on its campus stemming from the Black Student Movement (this signifies longevity in the field)	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
3. Occupies a free-standing facility or boasts a significant amount of square footage	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
4. Has a formally appointed executive or director with a substantial support staff	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
5. Maintains a formal operating budget over an extended period of time within the university's budget unit	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
6. Creates and submits strategic plans that align with regional or national accreditation standards (i.e., SACSA)	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
7. Submits regular annual reports that provide data for evaluation	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
8. Provides programmatic resources and services to the university campus	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
9. Has a visible and accessible location on campus	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
10. The director of the center has a formally recognizable position on the organizational chart	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
11. The executive of the center has a formalized reporting relationship with mid to senior level administrator on the student affairs or academic side	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
12. Has a director that is knowledgeable of the history and impact of BCCs and advocates for the center's stability	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
13. Has the support of the institution's upper level administration who advocate for the		

center's continued existence	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
14. Uses ongoing technology to communicate with the Association and other BCCs	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>

## Summary

This chapter addressed the findings from the cross case analysis that answered RQ2 which addressed shared characteristics for the two exemplary BCCs. Six themes were identified: a) Leadership & Legacy Make the Difference, b) Building Campus Connections at All Levels, c) Remaining Relevant and Advancing the Institution, d) Community Engagement and Collaboration, e) Student Ownership and a “Call to Action”, and f) Alumni Engagement and Involvement. Although all of the themes discussed above represent the shared exemplary characteristics across both centers, when identifying the most dominant or difference-making themes that one should consider when identifying exemplary Black Cultural Centers, the themes regarding Leadership, remaining relevant while advancing the institution, and student engagement/ownership answer this question . It seems that both centers had these as the core to their existence. Without these three themes working interdependently, the BCCs would not have been able to establish and build a legacy of impact on their campus because these three themes worked together interdependently during the formative years and currently operation on campus.

Additionally, the findings suggest that Institutionalization is a factor common to exemplary centers. Additionally, it seems that both centers actively work to maintain

their exemplary status but the framework doesn't truly address the internal effort of the centers internal effort to connect to campus to remain relevant and connected.

The findings in this chapter offer insight into the characteristics that mark exemplary BCCs, and more importantly how they are able to survive and thrive at PWIs. As shared above, the six central cross-case themes provided a framework for discussing the findings. The latter part of the chapter delved into similarities/ differences and the theoretical framework of institutionalization across institutions. This was necessary for rounding out the findings and focusing on specific ideas that garnered further discussion. The next chapter will summarize the study and offer suggestions and implications for higher education. It will summarize the key points of the study and the need for further research.

## Chapter 7

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, & CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to discern the factors that characterize exemplary BCCs at two Predominantly White institutions. Using a multi-site case study approach, this study specifically sought to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the factors associated with being an exemplary BCC?
- (2) What are the common factors associated with being an exemplary BCC across institutions?
- (3) How does Institutionalization relate as a common factor to exemplary BCCs?

The sources of data included interviews, site observations, document analysis, and field notes. The researcher analyzed the materials from or about each center, and then compared analyses across sites to derive answers to the research questions. This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the findings. It also addresses implications for our understanding of what allows BCCs to survive, thrive, and expand. In addition, suggestions for future research are presented.

#### **Summary of the Findings**

The findings from the study suggest that each center has factors that characterized their exemplary status. In answering research question 1, the center at University I revealed themes (factors) that included: a) Stable Leadership, b) Political Leverage Based on Fear and Accountability, c) Collaboration with Academic Affairs, d) Aligning with the University's goals, e) Community Engagement, f) Student

Engagement, g) Alumni Support, and h), Campus Connections. For the BCC at University II, there were seven themes (factors). These were: a) Familial Environment: Home Away From Home, b) Authentic Leadership, c) Training Ground for Future Leadership, d) Campus Collaboration, e) Community Involvement, f) Alumni Participation, and g) Student Engagement.

Once data analysis was done for each center, the researcher identified central cross analysis themes that answered research question 2 which concerned common characteristics of exemplary BCCs across institutions. The findings of the study indicated six themes that marked them as exemplary Black Cultural Centers. These six major themes included: a) Leadership & Legacy Make the Difference, b) Building Campus Connections at All Levels, c) Remaining Relevant and Advancing the Institution, d) Community Engagement and Collaboration, e) Student Ownership and a “Call to Action”, and f) Alumni Engagement and Sustainability. The findings also suggested that while these factors were shared across the two institutions, the history and institutional culture of each institution affected the way in which these factors played out at each institution. At each institution, the BCC had been institutionalized suggesting that institutionalization was a factor in their having achieved exemplary status.

## **Discussion**

It is important to note the findings of this study in relation to the literature on BCCs and any unexpected findings in the study. The literature on Black Culture Centers can be classified into three major categories: historical essays on the evolution of BCCs

in higher education, commentary about the role and function of BCCs in the lives of students, and anecdotal writings and commentary on the challenges, threats, and developmental paths of BCCs. Because there is no literature that examines the factors that make some BCCs exemplary, this study contributes information to the literature we do not currently have. There is a formidable amount of literature that talks about the climate of threat under which BCCs exist at many PWIs, but there is no literature that highlights the characteristics or factors that help BCCs sustain themselves in this climate of threat. These institutions provide blueprints for how they not only sustained themselves but have been able to thrive in the very climate that has led less than supportive climates for BCCs at other institutions. I think it is also interesting to note that although the two centers in this study have survived, are exemplary, and are institutionalized, and do not fear being dismantled, they still speak about a lingering concern and use it as motivation to ensure that they remain relevant on campus.

The literature on BCCs shows that many of them have closed, some have been transformed in name and mission, and many maintain at a status quo level of operation. The centers in this study have persevered and become "exemplary" centers. They appear to possess staying power, long-term stability, and institutional support that sets them apart from the others. Overall, this study informs the literature on the characteristics, actions, and ideas that explain how exemplary Black Cultural Centers are able to thrive, survive, and expand at PWIs, while others don't.

A few interesting findings also deserve mention. The alumni participation theme was a surprising and unexpected development. Both centers had strong relationships

with their alumni via associations, mentoring organizations, and even fiscal support initiatives. This showed that alumni could be a powerful ally for helping a BCC build its voice and presence on campus when engaging the campus administration. It also showed the university that the BCCs were able to cultivate self-sustaining initiatives on their own. This seems to separate the exemplary centers in this study from other BCCs.

Another interesting finding stemmed from the location and histories of the centers. University I is a private urban institution located in the heart of an urban community in the northeast, similar, yet different from University II which is a larger, Midwest public university also located in an urban environment. When analyzing the histories of each center, it was interesting to note the university responses during the student demand and protest phase. Campus administration at University I, the smaller private institution, responded more positively to combative outcries from Black student demands and moved quickly to establish a BCC, whereas University II initially responded negatively and waited until students approached them with a more strategic, non-combative approach. One would think that the public institution would respond similarly to student demands like University I, but it seemed that the public institution required a more tacit political approach to establishing their BCC. Perhaps the political climate at both institutions played a role in how campus administration responded to their Black student demands, which may also be tied to the leadership style of those campus leaders and administrators who were in positions of power. It also seemed that citywide activism may have been more explicit and accepted for University I than University II. Timing may have played a role in this, considering that

University II responded positively in the late 80s versus University I who responded positively in the late 60s at the height of the student protest era. While both movements were led by students, how they went about garnering support from their campus and the institutional responses were quite surprising and interesting.

## **Conclusions**

Some important conclusions may be drawn from the findings. First, we can conclude that exemplary BCCs do possess unique and specific factors that shape their existence and allows them to survive, thrive, and expand at PWIs. We can also conclude that the landscape of higher education can allow space for BCCs to exist today even amidst an ever-changing student population. However, these centers have to be institutionalized and have consistent and institutional support at all levels: students, faculty, staff, and campus leadership, to continue to thrive. We can also conclude that students play a major role in maintaining the exemplary status of BCCs, and as their needs change, so will the nature and character of these centers. The leadership of centers themselves must also remain committed to their mission while adapting to the evolving needs of its students and the campus. Finally, we can conclude that there is a place for exemplary BCCs at PWIs and that they continue to build a stronger legacy for cultural centers and the African American student experience.

## **Implications**

This findings of the study have implications for campuses that have Black Culture Centers (BCCs). First, it is evident that BCCs can be a major part of the university fabric and can play a significant role in the Black undergraduate student



experience. Thus, where BCCs exist, the institution should provide the necessary resources and support that will allow them to become exemplary. The exemplary BCCs in this study show the outcome of such support and of their singular contribution in helping to create communal environments of collaboration among and between the campus, the students, and the local community. As these exemplary centers continue to take the lead on their campuses to collaborate with all levels of campus, so does the institution continue to grow. The leadership of the center needs to be diligent in making their center a visible and viable player at the table of institutional politics and impact. This means being strategic and visionary, and making quality connections at all levels of campus. It also suggests that getting the local community and Black alumni actively engaged in the mission of the center helps build resources and leverage that helps the center remain a viable and needed entity on campus. Lastly, it suggests that the staff and leadership must never become complacent and must remain relevant to students and the campus.

Another implication for institutions of higher education is to be intentional about selecting effective leaders and staff for the BCC. The leadership and staff play a significant role in campus perception, student engagement, and campus impact. The leadership and staff are key to establishing a legacy on campus and in the community that garners intimate respect. The directors must continuously strive to build quality relationships with other campus entities to enhance the BCC and institutional mission. There were several other implications from the findings that could inform other institutions or BCCs who aspire to become an exemplary Black Cultural Center at PWIs.

1. Having effective leadership involved in the center and across campus (allies) is highly critical to establishing, expanding, and maintaining an exemplary BCC.
2. Student engagement and ownership is necessary. Students must take ownership in the establishment and preservation of the center.
3. Leadership must be visionary, strategic, and know how to serve the needs of several groups: campus administration, student needs, and the local community. Having a center with a stellar legacy of servant leadership and community empowerment creates a needed intimate respect for the center. While it is not a requirement it can help.
4. Partnering with the local community is a key component in establishing and building an exemplary BCC. This also improves the visibility of the center and the university as a whole.
5. Having an active and consistent relationship with alumni is also significant. This provides the opportunity to build professional and cultural opportunities for the center and connect the generations of Black alumni with African American students. It also provides opportunities for the BCCs to build their fiscal resources from within.
6. The exemplary BCCs of this study possessed a spirit of remaining relevant and actively positioning themselves for growth while being an asset to the institution.
7. It takes institutional commitment to establish and maintain these centers, thus institutionalization is a factor to be considered. Striving to become institutionalized can definitely help center become exemplary.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research can be extrapolated from this study and its findings. First, a longitudinal mixed method study across more exemplary BCCs in different regions would add significantly to the literature on exemplary BCCs. Secondly, there is still a lot we don't know about today's active BCCs nationally. A quantitative study that includes distributing a comprehensive survey to all active BCCs would be helpful. This could help gain a greater understanding of their resources, operation, campus impact, and student involvement and would give the ABCC more specific information on the landscape and positioning of today's BCCs. This would allow for accumulating concrete data on the status of all BCCs and could also lay the groundwork for developing a possible set model for improving and further developing BCCs

In many cases today, multicultural center are the direct outcome of a BCC beginning its transitional phase-out. Thus, since BCCs were the precursors to many multicultural centers, research that focuses on the characteristics of multicultural centers and other ethnic-based facilities is needed to explain the dynamics of their impact in comparison to exemplary BCCs. This information could help us understand how and why some BCCs were forced to change their mission and might offer insight into how existing BCCs might sustain themselves and avoid transitioning.

Finally, another key area for future research could focus on understanding the BCCs that were closed down. What factors led to their closure? Was it cultural, institutional, political, or something unknown? This could inform aspiring BCCs as well. The study of Black Cultural Centers and their diversity impact at PWIs is still in its

fairly new and could benefit more empirical research to help build the literature that supports their existence on college campuses. A key resource for conducting future research on Black Cultural Centers is the Association of Black Culture Centers (ABCC) and its Board of Trustees. They work diligently to provide research and streamlined practices to empower and encourage the existence of BCCs at PWIs.

### **Summary**

Black Cultural Centers were founded out of protest and are still representative of the progress that has been made over the years with regard to enhancing diversity at PWIs. Even within a national climate of threat, the exemplary BCCs in this study reflect the importance of the continued mission of supporting, uplifting and celebrating Black students and Black culture. The findings here have provided an in-depth look at how these centers continue to survive and thrive and explain characteristics that mark them as exemplary centers. The characteristics and factors that shape exemplary Black Cultural Centers at PWIs show that there can be a permanent place for BCCs at PWIs. While neither was perfect, both centers were highly impactful on their campus historically, socially, and educationally. Both centers are profound assets to their campus and are not at threat of becoming extinct. Institutionalization was an important factor in these centers having a permanent place at their institution. It is important that these centers remain at PWIs and continue to serve as models of success and progress for other cultural centers.

## List of References

- Adler, E., & Clark, R. (2003). *How it's done: An invitation to social research* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.
- Akbar, N. (1993). *The centering of Black culture [video lecture]*. Tallahassee, FL: Mind Productions and Associates.
- Allen, W. (1992). The color of success: African-American college student outcomes at predominantly White and historically Black public universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1), 26-44.
- Anderson, T. (1990). *Black studies: Theory, method, and cultural perspectives*. Seattle, WA: Washington State University Press.
- Anfara, V. A. Jr., & Mertz, N. T. (2006). *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Anonymous. (2002). University of Missouri renames Black culture center. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 18(23), 14-15.
- Bankhole, K. (2006). An overview of Black culture centers in higher education. In F. Hord (Ed.), *Black culture centers: Politics of survival and identity* (pp. 164-182). Chicago, IL: Third World Press.
- Barley, S. R., & Tolbert, P. S. (1997). Institutionalization and structuration: Studying the links between action and institution. *Organization Studies*, 18(1), 93-117.
- Bassey, M. (1999). *Case study research in educational settings*. Buckingham England: Open University Press.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.

- Bennett, C., & Okinaka, A. (1990). Factors related to persistence among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White undergraduates at a predominantly White university: Comparisons between first and fourth year cohorts. *The Urban Review*, 22(1), 33-60.
- Bennett, S. M. (1998). Self-segregation: An oxymoron in Black and White. In K. Freeman (Ed.), *African American culture and heritage in higher education research and practice* (pp. 129-130). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Bennett, W. (1971). The Afro-American cultural center. *Harvard Journal of Afro-American Affairs*, 2(2), 18-29.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (1st ed.). Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1991). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bonner, F. A., & Bailey, K. W. (2006). Enhancing the academic climate for African American college men. In M. J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American men in college* (pp. 24-46). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brown, O. G., Hinton, K. G., & Hamilton, M. F. (2007). *Unleashing suppressed voices on college campuses: Diversity issues in higher education*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

- Buttney, R. (1999). Discursive constructions of racial boundaries and self-segregation on campus. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 18*(3), 247-268.
- Cabrera, A., & Nora, A. (1994). College students' perceptions of prejudice and their feelings of alienation. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 16*(3), 387-409.
- Cabrera, A., Nora, A., Terenzini, P., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustment of student to college: A comparison between White students and African American students. *The Journal of Higher Education, 70*(2), 134-160.
- Clark, T. N. (1968). Institutionalization of innovations in higher. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 13*(1), 1-25.
- Crenshaw, K. W., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York, NY: New Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Merrill.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Curry, B. (1992). *Instituting enduring innovations: Achieving continuity of change in higher education*. ASHE ERIC Higher Education Reports, No. 7  
Washington, DC: George Washington University.
- Delgado, R. (1995). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.



- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (p. 1-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Digest of Education Statistics*. (2003). College enrollment and enrollment rates of recent high school completers, by race/ethnicity: 1960 to 2001. [Data file]
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147-160.
- Donnelly, J., Gibson, J., & Ivancevich, J. (1973). *Organizations: Structure, process, behavior*. Dallas, TX: Business Publications.
- DuBois, W. (1994). *The Souls of Black Folk*. Avenel, NJ: Gramercy Books.
- Exum, W. H. (1985). *Paradoxes of protest: Black student activism in a White university*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Fairclough, A. (2001). *To redeem the soul of America: The southern christian leadership conference & Martin Luther King Jr.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Fleming, J. E. (1981). Blacks in Higher Education to 1954: A Historical Overview. In G. E. Thomas (Ed.) *Black students in higher education: Conditions and experiences in the 1970's* (pp. 11-17). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Foote, K. (2006). Excerpts from home away from home. In F. Hord (Ed.) *Black culture centers: Politics of survival and identity* (pp. 183-201). Chicago, IL: Third World Press.

- Gall, J. P., Gall, M. D., & Borg, W. R. (1999). *Applying educational research: A practical guide* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Gaston-Gayles, J., Tuttle, K. N., Twombly, S. B., Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. E. (2004). *Reflecting back, looking forward: Civil rights and student affairs*. Washington, DC: NASPA.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (1989). *Schooling for democracy: Critical pedagogy in the modern age*. London, England: Routledge.
- Gibson, J. L., Ivancevich, J. M., & Donnelly, Jr., J. H. (1973). *Organizations: Structure, processes, behavior*. Dallas, TX: Business Publications.
- Goodman, P. S., & Bazerman, M. (1979). Institutionalization of planned organizational change. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (pp. 215-246). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 306, 123 S. Ct 2325 (2003).
- Harper, F. D. (1975). *Black students, White campuses*. Washington, DC: APGA Press.
- Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. In S. R. Harper & L. D. Patton (Eds.), *Responding to the realities of race on Campus: New directions for student services*, No. 120 (pp. 5-12). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

- Hayden, R.C. (1993). *The History of the African American Institute: The early years*. Northeastern University: John D. O'bryant African American Institute.
- Hefner, D. (2002). Black cultural centers: Standing on shaky ground. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 18(26), 22-29.
- Hinderlie, H. H., & Kenny, M. (2002). Attachment, social support, and college adjustment among Black students at predominantly White universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(3), 327-340.
- Hord, F. (1993). Conference goal: Institutionalizing Black culture centers. *NOMMO Newsletter of the Association for Black Culture Centers*, 4(2), 4-8.
- Hord, F. L. (2006). *Black culture centers: Politics of survival and identity*. Chicago, IL: Third World Press.
- Hughes, E. C. (1936). The ecological aspects of institutions. *American Sociological Review*, 1(2), 180-189.
- Hurtado, S., & Dey, E. L. (1997). Achieving the goals of multiculturalism and diversity. In M. W. Peterson, D. D. Dill, & L. A. Mets (Eds.), *Planning and management for a changing environment: A handbook on redesigning postsecondary institutions* (pp. 270-302). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pederson, A., & Walter, A. (1999). Enacting diverse learning environments: Improving the climate for racial/ethnic diversity in higher education. *ASHE/ERIC Higher Education Report Series* 26(8). Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

- Kee, A. (1999). *Campus climate: perceptions, policies, and programs in community Colleges* (Research Brief AACC-RB-992). Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.
- Kezar, A. (2001). Understanding and facilitating organizational change in the 21st Century: Recent research and conceptualizations. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports*, 28(4), 1-147.
- Kezar, A. (2007). Tools for a time and place: Phased leadership strategies to institutionalize a diversity agenda. *The Review for Higher Education*, 30(4), 413-439.
- Kimberly, J. R. (1979). Issues in the creation of organizations: Initiation, innovation, and Institutionalization. *Academy of Management Journal*, 22(3), 437-457.
- Kramer, M (2000). *Make it last forever: The Institutionalization of service learning in America*. Washington, DC: Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic perspectives. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 257-278). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Loo, C. M., & Rolison, G. (1986). Alienation of ethnic minority students at a predominantly White university. *Journal of Higher Education*, 57(1), 58-77.
- Manning, K. (1992). A rationale for using qualitative research in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 33, 132-136.
- Marcuse, H. (1964). *One dimensional man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial*

*society*. Boston, MA: Beacon.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San

Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, K.K. (2001). Negroes no more: The emergence of Black student

activism. In A. Bloom (Ed.) *Long time gone: Sixties America then and now* (pp. 123-

135). Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.

Mingle, J. R. (1981). The opening of White colleges and universities to Black

students. In G. E. Thomas (Ed.), *Black students in higher education:*

*Conditions and experiences in the 1970s* (pp. 18-29). Westport, CT:

Greenwood Press.

Parker, L., & Lynne, M. (2002). What's race got to do with it? Critical race theory's

conflict with and connections to qualitative research methodology and

epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 7-22.

Patton, L. (2004). From protest to progress? An examination of the relevance,

relationships and roles of Black Culture Centers in the undergraduate

experiences of Black students at predominantly white institutions

(Doctoral dissertation). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65, 292.

Patton, L. D. (2005). Power to the people! Black student protest and the

emergence of Black culture centers. In F. Hord (Ed.), *Black culture centers:*

*Politics of survival and identity* (pp. 151-163). Chicago, IL: Third World Press.

- Patton, L. D. (2006). The voice of reason: A qualitative examination of Black student perceptions of Black culture centers. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(6), 628-646.
- Patton, L. D. (2006). Black culture centers: Still central to student learning. *About Campus*, 11(2), 2-8.
- Patton, L. D. (2007). Case #5: conflict in the midst of culture: the transition from cultural center to multicultural center. In O. Brown, K. Hinton, & M. Howard-Hamilton (Eds.), *Unleashing suppressed voices on college campuses: Diversity issues in higher education*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Patton, L. D. (2008). Collaboration for cultural programming: engaging culture centers, multicultural affairs, and student activities offices as partners. In S. Harper (Ed.), *Creating inclusive campus environments for cross-cultural learning and student engagement* (pp. 139-154). NASPA.
- Patton, L. D. (2010). *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pittman, E. (1994). Cultural centers on predominantly White campuses: Campus, cultural, and social comfort equals retention, last word. *Black Issues in*

- Higher Education*, 11(10), 4.
- Powell, W. W., & DiMaggio, P. (1991). *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Princes, C. D. W. (1994). *The precarious question of Black cultural centers versus multicultural centers*. (Report No. HE 028386) Harrisburg, PA: Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED383273)
- Princes, C. D. W. (2006). The precarious question of Black cultural centers versus multicultural centers. In F. Hord (Ed.), *Black culture centers and political identities* (135-146). Chicago, IL: Third World Press.
- Rojas, F. (2007). *From Black power to Black studies: How a radical social movement became an academic discipline*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Roseboro, D. (2006). Coming out Black: The student movement for the Sonja Haynes Stone Black cultural center at UNC-Chapel Hill. *NASAP Journal*, 9(1), 67-82.
- Sack, D. (1969, May 23). Student disorders unfurl on campus community; administration, UBA ponder university's future. *University of Cincinnati News Record*, pp. 1, 3.
- Sanders, P., & Liptrot, D. (1994). *An incomplete guide to qualitative research methods for counselors*. Manchester, England: PCCS.
- Seidman, A. (1993). *Needed: A research methodology to assess community*

- college effectiveness. *Community College Journal*, 63(5), 36-40.
- Seidman, A. (1996). Retention revisited:  $RET = E Id + (E + I + C)Iv$ . *College and University*, 71(4), 18-20.
- Sewell, W. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1-29.
- Sorlozano, D. (1998). Critical race theory, race, and gender micro aggressions, and the experience of Chicanos and Chicano studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 121-136.
- Steele, C. (1992). Race and the schooling of Black America. *Atlantic Monthly*, 269(4), 68-78.
- Stewart, G., Russell, R. B., & Wright, D. B. (1997). The comprehensive role of student affairs in African American student retention. *Journal of College Admission*, 154, 6-11.
- Stewart, J. B. (2006). Bridging time, space, and technology: Challenges confronting Black cultural centers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In F. Hord (Ed.), *Black culture centers: Politics of survival and identity* (pp. 75-87). Chicago, IL: Third World Press.
- Stovall, A. J. (2006). Why black culture centers? The philosophical bases for Black culture centers. In F. Hord (Ed.), *Black culture centers: Politics of survival and identity* (pp. 102-111). Chicago, IL: Third World Press.
- Goble, D. (2009, November 6). The University of Tennessee Knoxville: Office of



- Minority Student Affairs/Black Cultural Center . Retrieved from  
<http://oma.osu.edu/current-students/hale-black-cultural-center/>
- Thelin, J. R. (2004). *A history of American higher education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Thomas, G. E. (1981). *Black students in higher education: Conditions and experiences in the 1970s*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Tolbert, P. S., & Zucker, L. G. (1999). The Institutionalization of institutional theory. In S. Clegg & C. Hardy (Eds.) *Studying organization: Theory and method* (pp. 169-184). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Turner, S. S. (1994). Guests in someone else's house: Students of color. *The Review of Higher Education*, 17(4), 355-370.
- Wendel, L. (2004). *Reflecting back, looking forward: Civil rights and student affairs*. Washington, DC: NASPA.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Young, L. W. (1986). The role minority student centers Play on predominantly White campuses. In C. A. Taylor (Ed.), *Handbook of minority student services* (p. 34-39). Madison, WI: Praxis Publications. Document Reproduction Service No. ED383273.
- Young, L. W. (1991). The minority cultural center on a predominantly white

- campus. In H. E. Cheatham (Ed.), *Cultural pluralism on campus* (pp. 41-53).  
Alexandria, VA: American College Personnel Association.
- Young, L. W., & Hannon, M. D. (2002). The staying power of Black cultural  
centers. *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 18(26), 10.
- Young, L. W. (2006). Black Cultural Centers and Black Studies: Links,  
Lines, and Legitimacy. In F. Hord (Ed.), *Black culture centers: Politics of  
survival and identity* (pp. 147-163). Chicago, IL: Third World Press.
- Zucker, L. G. (1977). The role of Institutionalization in cultural persistence. *American  
Sociological Review*, 42, 26-43.

## Appendices

## APPENDIX A

### **Informed Consent Form for A Case Study of Two Exemplary Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) in Higher Education**

#### Informed Consent Statement

Dear Prospective Participant,

You have been identified as an exemplary Black Cultural Center, and you are invited to participate in a study regarding exemplary **BCCs at PWIs**. This research is being conducted by Demetrius D. Richmond, a fifth year Ph.D. candidate from the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Levels of “value” and support for BCCs via position/placement of operation, financial investment, and stability are varied depending on the campus, as some BCCs are often marginalized, while other exemplars are at the “center” of campus life, functions, and campus culture. In an effort to understand the characteristics that associate with exemplary BCCs at PWIs, the researcher felt it important to conduct a study to understand what processes, events, and characteristics account for the exemplary BCCs that seem to persist even while faced with climates of threat and uncertainty.

Your participation will involve providing demographic information and submitting to an interview where you will be asked questions related to your past/present educational experiences related to operation of the BCC. These sessions will last between 30 to 45 minutes and will be recorded.

Please note that your responses will be kept strictly confidential. All recordings and related notes will be stored in a locked and secure file cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the information you provide. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. If the results of this research are published or presented at conferences, your identity will not be disclosed.

Although it is not perceived that you will directly benefit from participating in this study, the data generated from your interview, along with others, will be used to inform those in our field about the operation of Black Cultural Centers at PWIs. Hopefully this will lead to policy that will positively affect said experience.

In rare cases, a research study will be evaluated by an oversight agency, such as the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board or the federal Office for Human Research Protections that would require that I share the information collected from you.

If this happens, the information would only be used to determine if this study was conducted properly and adequately protected your rights as a participant.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's initials

**Consent:**

By signing this consent form, I am indicating that I have read and understand the information provided above and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time.

**Participant's Name**\_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature**\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of the Investigator**

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this document and freely consents to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Demetrius D. Richmond**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (must be the same as participant's)

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Protocol

#### Introduction:

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. We will be recording this interview. Do you have any questions regarding the procedure or the IRB informed consent form you signed? Thank you. Let's begin the interview*

#### Demographic Information

Name

How do you define yourself in terms of your race or ethnicity?

Education

Current Occupation & Tenure

Contact information

#### Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experiences here at the BCC.
  - a. What is your present position and role?
  - b. How long have you been here?
  - c. What programs, services, or resources do you all provide for the campus?
  - d. Do you know past administrators who were over the center?
2. Who are the most important people, voices, or events that helped spark the evolution or heritage of the center?
  - a. How long has the center been here?
  - b. How was it started?
  - c. Was there a particular effort or movement from students, staff, faculty, that led to the building of the center?
    - i. How did that happen
    - ii. Who was involved? How long did it take?
  - d. Were there meetings that took place? How did those emerge?
  - e. What kind of initial attempts were made on behalf of the institution to address the idea of a BCC here on campus?

3. Were their particular processes, procedures or staff put in place to support the idea of a BCC
  - a. What was the campus response to an idea of a BCC? Student perspective? Administrative perspective? Community?
  - b. Were people accepting of the idea? How did they express that?
4. Were their external constituents involved?
5. How did the institution communicate the message of building a new center to everyone? Who were the messengers? What role did the messengers play in the success or failure of the center?
6. What concrete actions were implemented to support the building of the BCC on campus?
7. What cultural changes or actions were implemented?
8. How did the university fund the building? How is it funded today?
9. How long did it take would you say from you said it took a conscious effort to really go from the house to this whole process of getting the new center.
10. So would you say that it was a rigorous process met with a lot of resistance or was it more you had a more a response- responsive from the school and administration?

## VITA

Originally from Memphis, TN, Demetrius is the youngest of 8 children and graduated from the University of Arkansas - Fayetteville, "Home of the Arkansas Razorbacks", with a Master's degree in Communication Studies in 2004. In 2001, he graduated from the University of Central Arkansas known as the "Center for Learning" with a Bachelor's degree in Communication Studies-Broadcasting.

He is a young professional with a passion to serve young adults and he believes in the power of higher education and student development. It was during his teaching and graduate assistantships that he developed a commitment to working with and developing young adults in higher education. He worked two years in the Office of Student Support Services as a Student Development Specialist/Communications Coordinator at the University of Arkansas, which is where he decided that the field of higher education was his element of desire.

His passion for helping students develop their "genius" eventually led him to the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, where he is now pursuing his Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration. He spent 5 years in the Office of Minority Student Affairs/Black Cultural Center at UT focusing on diversity initiatives, cultural awareness, student support, campus programming, and leadership development. He is now the Coordinator (III) of Recruitment for the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences here UT-Knoxville. It is in this role that he advises students, coordinates recruitment/retention initiatives for the college, and teaches a first year studies course.

His academic pursuits are in the areas of: African-American Retention and Programming at Predominantly White Institutions, Intercultural Communication in Student Affairs, Culture Centers, and Public Policy. His immediate plans are to finish his Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration and accept a mid-level administrative position that will allow him to serve students as an administrator and college instructor.