

# Black Ink

The essence of freedom is understanding

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## Blacks Studies Department Continues To Grow in 80s

by Joy Thompson  
Staff Writer

Born during the 1960s as an answer to student demands for Black experience college courses, African and Afro-American Studies has become one of the fastest growing curriculums on the UNC-CH campus.

Currently housed in Alumi Hall, the African and Afro-American studies programs have only recently been combined.

"We proudly proclaim that we are one of the biggest (curriculums) at the University," said Dr. Colin Palmer, head of the curriculum since 1980.

"We are teaching 710 students just for fall semester," he said. That's three times the number of students taking African and Afro-American curriculum courses in the academic year 1979-1980.

Palmer said more than 1,000 students participated in the curriculum last year and more than a fourth of them were white. "We've been able to attract a sizable population of white students," he asserted, "and I hope this number will increase."

The curriculum's growth is somewhat surprising in comparison to other North Carolina Universities' Black studies departments. Most of those have seen declines in program enrollment.

However, Palmer attributed his program's success to a number of things.

"I think we have some very effective teachers," he said. The curriculum has also been fair to students while being challenging. "We're not offering any slide courses," he said. "The percentage of A's and B's we award is well below the University average."

Dr. J. Lee Greene, a professor in the English department and former acting chairman of the Afro-American curriculum, said Universi-

ty support was important also. Greene said, "I think as University support continues, the (program's) growth will also continue."

Palmer said: "The University has to...allocate resources accordingly. It must take hold of this growth and expand support or else the program will diminish."

For example, some classes have more than 200 students, he said. Classes can't get any larger, so with University help, more professors and teaching assistants could be hired.

The University has responded by creating two new positions in the curriculum, according to Stephen Birdsall, associate dean of Arts and Sciences. "We felt the curriculum was doing its job, and with the tremendous growth in enrollment, it was something we had to attend to through additional resources."

"We've also committed ourselves to the renovation of the office space in Alumni Hall to accommodate additional faculty and to better suit the activities of the curriculum," Birdsall said. Although details have yet to be worked out by the University, he maintained that the project had "high priority."

Greene said, "the college and the chancellor together are providing financial support for a new bibliographical project...to develop a computerized research tool about Afro-American life and history." The bibliographical guide to Afro-Americana was the idea of the Black Staff and Faculty Caucus and is expected to be completed in 1985 or 1986.

In addition, the curriculum is looking to other departments for resources. Palmer said, "We now have resources to purchase the time of other individuals from other departments...we can utilize the expertise of a broader range of faculty members." Greene, Darnell Hawkins, an associate professor from

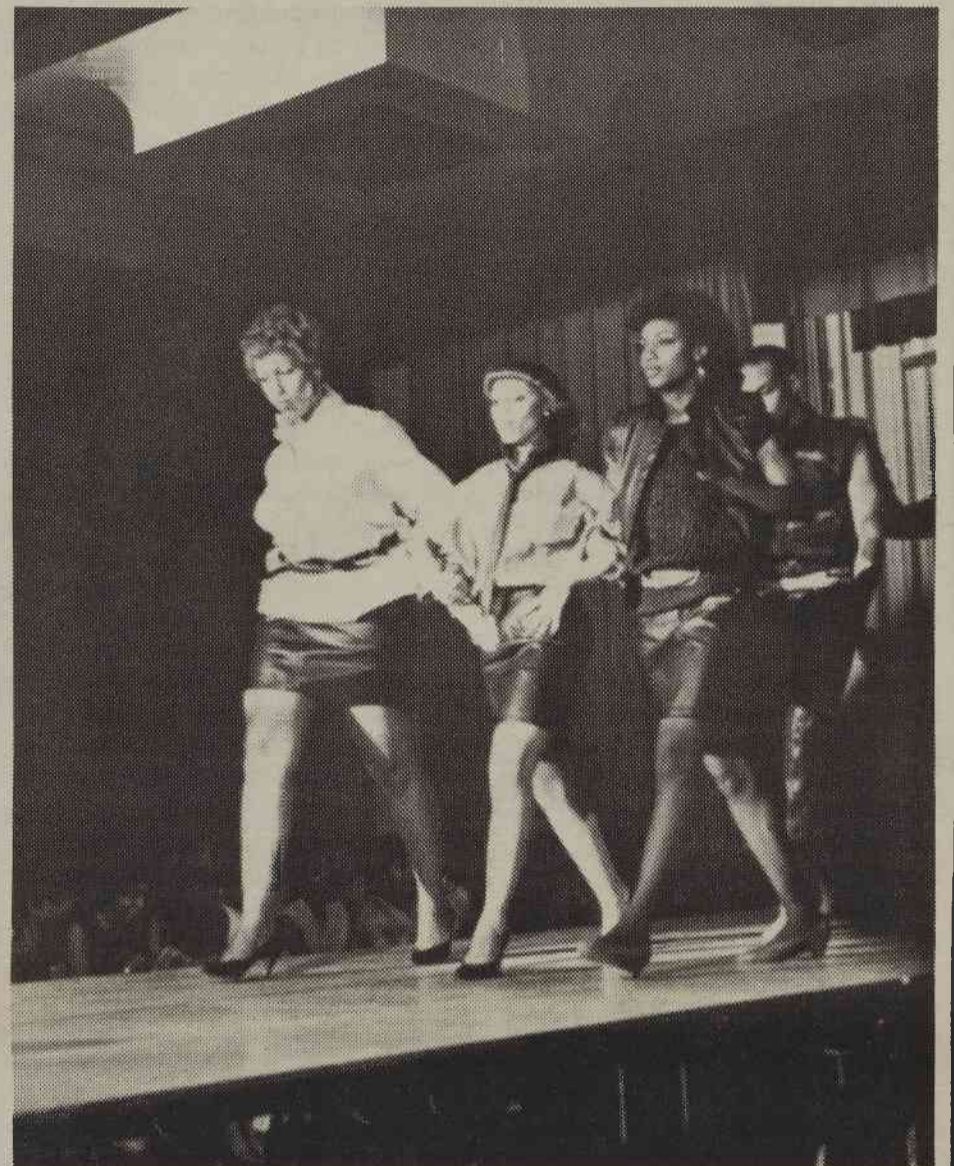


Photo by: Denise Moultrie

## Fine For Days!

Tamara McDowell, Debra Terry and Jeaneatte Everette show their stuff at "Fall Fashion 84." The fashion show, sponsored by the Mu Zeta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., featured models from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, The Ladies of Black and Gold and the Brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity on Oct. 26 in Great Hall.

the sociology department, and Thomas Q. Reefe, a professor from the history department, currently work with the curriculum.

Five new courses have been added to the curriculum: Black Women in America, Black Political Thought, Black Nationalism in the Americas, Black Aesthetics, and Gender, Race and Class in Afro-American History. Three new sections of The Black Experience (AFAM 40) have been added also because of the course's popularity.

Palmer pointed out that the courses can fill a General College requirement and are attracting students from across the campus.

The African and Afro-American curriculum also has a culture series associated with it. Herman Bennett, a junior from Hanau, Germany, is the new series coordinator and has scheduled things from poetry readings by Black faculty members and students to a panel discussion on the 1984 elections.