

BCC: No Location Chosen Yet, Officials Say

By Jacqueline Charles
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When the glass doors to the Black Cultural Center in the Student Union were opened three years ago, students were told that the location would be temporary.

However, despite the center's growth and demands by students for a free-standing building, the BCC has yet to find a home of its own.

"While it's comfortable and attractive, we can't seat any more than 25 people," BCC Director Margo Crawford said. "The current facilities are inadequate."

Currently, many of the BCC-sponsored programs are held elsewhere around campus.

"Usually when you go to a cultural center, you see the artifacts and artwork of that culture," said Crawford, co-chair of the National Association of Black Cultural Centers.

However, with the BCC's limited space and three walls, Crawford says it is not only difficult to have exhibits or programming of any type but also embarrassing.

"When people from other centers come and see the facility, it's an embarrassment," she said. "We don't have a Black Cultural Center. We have a Black Cultural Center office."

This year, as part of its overall focus to devote its efforts toward the BCC, the Black Student Movement has asked Crawford to conduct all BCC programs in the "office."

"The point needs to be made

that we are in an office," said Arnie Epps, BSM president. "This space is a box. A lobby."

A feasibility study conducted in the summer of 1989 by architectural consultant Theresa Crossland of Facilities Planning, outlined requirements for a structure with an area of 23,000 sq. feet that will cost about \$3 million. The center would include such things as a library, media room, dance studio and art gallery.

"A free standing building gives it a sense of autonomy," Epps said.

Last year there was even talk of renovating the 25,000-square-foot Howell Hall if the School of Journalism moved into Carroll Hall when the School of Business evacuates that facility for a new building.

But this idea has students and the BCC's advisory board skeptical.

Harold G. Wallace, vice chancellor of university affairs and chairman of the advisory board, said the board is politically cautious of the Howell Hall idea.

"We don't want to be trapped in a transition space," Wallace said.

Although Wallace admits that the board is still deliberating on the question of space, he said that it appeared the board was leaning towards a free-standing building. The advisory board will present its position in a written statement to both Crawford and the BSM in a few weeks.

While all those involved recognize that the process will take time, Crawford said one of the first things that needs to be done is to get Chancellor Paul Hardin to repriori-



Erika F. Campbell/Black Ink

Students crowd in BCC for Angela Medlin's art exhibit last week

tize construction of a BCC building. Currently, this construction is listed in Category III of the University's 1991 Guide to Physical Development.

Advocates of a free-standing facility say the objective will be to move BCC construction out of the needed projects section and into Category I, or the projects-in-construction section.

According to vice chancellor Donald Boulton, dean of student affairs, the chancellor, in meetings with representatives of the BSM and Campus Y, "has not made a decision on any free-standing building of any kind."

"Additional space is few and far between," Boulton said.

However, those involved in the meetings said the chancellor does seem supportive of other BCC-related issues, such as the renaming of the center to the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center and creating an endowed chair on behalf of Stone, the late professor of Afro-American Studies.

The Board of Trustees will vote on the renaming October 25. As for the endowed chair, Epps said that while Hardin seems to support the idea, the chancellor has said that donations have to come from outside sources for the chair.

Given the chancellor's position on both the issues of a free-standing building and an endowed chair, the

BSM and BCC are looking toward students and faculty to have their voices heard.

"The student voice has always been consistent and strong," Crawford said. "We need the voice of the black and white faculty and staff members on campus to go in with the voice of the black and white students."

Leading the way in eliciting student and faculty support for the BCC are the BSM and Campus Y. Both have dedicated this year to the memory of Stone.

Last week was designated as "African-American Culture Week" by the BSM. It is just one of a variety of programs aimed at educating both students and faculty about black culture and the need for a BCC.

"There is something important about the black culture experience that we need to share with the rest of the members of society," Wallace said. "The BCC serves black and white students, faculty and community members."

The need to provide this "black culture experience," was what motivated BSM leaders 11 years ago to pressure the university for a BCC. And while administrators did not embrace the idea right away, students found a strong ally in their corner.

As chair of the AFAM curriculum, Sonja Stone played a key role

in advising students on how to go about educating the administration to the idea.

Stone was the BSM's main linkage to the administration. She was the faculty voice," Crawford said.

Through Stone's help, students began to come together and organize. They formed committees and looked into other centers across the country. Through time and commitment the idea blossomed. Each year, new students rose to the forefront and made the fight a personal one.

While Stone's passing has greatly saddened students, it also has created a renewed interest and commitment by students, both black and white, to continue the fight.

"Student momentum has escalated so, that the administration will not be able to ignore them," Crawford said.

And while the BCC in its current facility, at best can only serve as an office, Epps feels that with continued support and active participation, students can make the BCC indeed a center and not just an office.

"(The BCC) should be an educational experience every time you open the doors," he said.

