

The Black Student Union: From One Student's Perspective

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Currently, there is a new organization that is trying to find its way onto Meredith's campus and make its presence known. Though it is not an official Meredith College organization yet, there is already a lot of buzz about it around campus. The Black Student Union, created by Kimberley Crutcher and Melody Butler to serve as a civic, community, social, and cultural resource for the black students at Meredith, is not only for black students but also for students who are interested in learning about black culture. The purpose of this organization is to influence the policies affecting black students as a civil organization. As a cultural organization, it strives to promote academic performance, intellectual growth and intimate interaction between its members, as well as the Raleigh community. The Meredith College Black Student Union also strives to provide active service in efforts for not just the Meredith Community, but the greater community as well. As the organization has been trying to get on its feet, there has been opposition coming from both sides about whether or not the organization should be allowed on Meredith's campus. It seems that many feel that this organization is not needed because it will either segregate the black students from the other students and

will cause competition with ACA. I, as a black student on Meredith's campus, do not feel that way. Now before you get the wrong idea, I just want to let you know that I am not speaking on behalf of all the black students here at Meredith. Instead I am just sharing my own personal opinion on the issue.

I don't think that having the Black Student Union on campus will segregate the black students from the other students. Instead, I believe that it will not only unite the black students on campus but educate all students on Black culture. For example, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the second largest organization on campus is their Black Student Movement (BSM), which was established in 1967 in an effort to help the slow growth of the black population on campus and serve as a voice for the black students. They not only help promote black culture on the campus but also have helped bridge the gap between other various cultures on campus. Plus, they continue to be very influential in the recruitment of minority students to the university. They have managed to prosper for almost 38 years without segregating themselves from the rest of the student body. Down the street at North Carolina State University, an organization called the African Student Union (ASU) exists. This organization was established to promote African

culture and the importance of scholarship and service on the campus of NCSU and the greater Raleigh community. For both organizations, membership is open to ALL students at their particular schools. So my question is why couldn't the same thing happen here at Meredith? Would it be so bad to have a positive organization like the BSM or ASU here working to improve conditions for African-American students? Are we afraid of something that we don't know? Or is it that we don't want to know? These schools have managed to have these organizations along with other cultural organizations and maintain accord throughout the student body. What makes people think the same thing isn't possible here at Meredith? The school has survived this long without any problems from the various minority groups, so what makes them think that having a black student union will cause segregation and discord among the student body. People have to realize that times are changing. Each year the number of minorities, especially African-Americans, increases more than the year before, so I think it's about time we have an organization here working to make sure that they have an easy transition to college and are able to be connected to the black community. Yes, there is the Multicultural Symposium in the summer for minority students, but most of the time

a majority of those students are not able to attend because of either prior commitments or lack of knowledge about the event. So how are the students, like myself, who didn't attend the symposium supposed to adjust and find people like themselves that they can bond with and look to for support? That's where the BSU would step in and help ease that problem for the students. This would be a way for those who didn't get to attend the summer symposium to meet those who did attend along with other minority students already on campus. Hopefully, from there friendships will be formed and bonds will be made, creating a feeling of harmony between the minority students. Now you're probably thinking, "Doesn't ACA do the same thing?" My answer to that would be somewhat. The organization does have events dealing with black culture, but only during Black History Month, and they also spend time covering other cultures as well. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that the ACA is not influential; it is, but that organization is now designed to primarily focus on promoting diversity on campus. The BSU, like the Black Student Movement at UNC-Chapel Hill, would focus mainly on being a voice for the black students here on campus and establishing connections between Meredith and the black community of Raleigh. The black

community of Raleigh does so much with other universities in the area, such as Shaw University and St. Augustine's College, from donating their time and money to supporting the athletic teams as well, and I think it's time to get them involved here at Meredith and let them know that we are here as well. We have to make sure that we never lose contact with the black community. With their help, we will be able to introduce Meredith to a new audience while providing positive and productive programs that emphasize unity and offer outlets for expressing Black ideals and culture. In a sense, the two organizations could work together as one, making sure that changes are made and that more activities directed towards minorities take place on campus.

As I said before, this article is just the opinion of one African-American student, and I am only speaking for myself. I hope that the decision makers of the college will take into consideration the opinions of one student and hopefully give the organization a chance.

If anyone would like more information on the Black Student Union, please direct any questions to the organizers of the organization, Kimberley Crutcher at crutcher@meredith.edu and Melody Butler at butlerme@meredith.edu.

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