



SHARING A MOMENT—North Carolina State University students are seen enjoying a conversation on the University's spacious West Raleigh Campus.

Educators Continue Challenges For Students On NCSU Campus

African-American students, who make up 8.7 percent of the student body at North Carolina State University, are involved in virtually all aspects of campus life at NCSU, from academics to athletics and social activities.

But because research has shown that African-American students may encounter social and structural difficulties when they attend a predominantly white institution as large as NCSU, a number of support programs, student organizations and services have been created to assist African Americans in enjoying the full benefits of college life.

Dr. Rhonda Covington, interim coordinator of African-American Student Affairs at NCSU, said the scope of programs in support of African-Americans is broad. There are 24 registered African-American student associations and a number of other general interest groups and organizations.

These groups are clustered around several areas, she said, such as professional organizations and societies, service organizations, traditional fraternities and sororities and cultural and arts programs.

"All of them exist so that African Americans on campus have an opportunity to explore like interests, find their niche, their own identity..." Covington said.

Professional organizations like the Society for Black Engineers, for example, encourage academic scholarship, networking with others interested in similar fields and the pursuit of career goals, Covington said.

Service organizations provide a service to the campus community as well as help

members pursue career goals. The Peer Mentor program draws on student volunteers to aid first-year African-American students adjust to campus life.

The program's goal is to aid students in academic, emotional and social adjustments. Each entering African-American student is matched with a mentor who shares information about the campus, refers the student to appropriate services and resources and generally acts as a "big brother" or "big sister" to help the student feel at ease and welcome on the NCSU campus, Covington said.

Three groups that represent African-American students' general concerns on campus are the African-American Student Advisory Council, the Black Student Board and the Society of African-American Culture.

Activities of these groups range from staging the annual Minority Career Fair, to promoting idea exchanges among student leaders and serving in advocacy roles for African-American student concerns.

Other African-American groups that promote the cultural heritage of blacks include the African-American Heritage Society, Dance Visions and the New Horizons Choir.

Covington said the goal of all these groups is to provide for African-American students at NCSU support, academic involvement and leadership experiences that will carry them into their future careers.

She added that when social and structural support systems such as these are made available to all students, not just African Americans, the university also benefits by being able to attract and retain quality students.



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