African-American Student Association (Afro Am)

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The African-American Student Association has gradually become one of the biggest multicultural student organizations on campus with a growing aspiration to accomplish both old and new goals.

**Mission**

The African-American Student Association is intended to encourage and support African-Americans to succeed as students at Oklahoma State University and as members of the community as a whole. “The purpose of the African-American Student Association is to unify and promote the cultural heritage of African-American people.  This effort will be to define the interaction between the academic, social, and political lives of the Black students attending Oklahoma State University,” according to the Oklahoma State University African-American Student Association Web site.

**History**

The African-American Student Association was established on the Oklahoma State University campus 46 years ago, according to Devin Stanfield, president of the African-American Student Association. In November of 1967, a select group of students began to recognize racial turmoil amongst its peers. These students led protests that persisted on an organization being formed. This select group of students believed that an organization of its own would allow it to educate its campus, allowing non-Blacks to gain a greater respect for the Black people and a greater understanding of their cultural heritage, according to the African-American Student Association Web site.

African-American students were overcome with a feeling of separation from other ethnicities. This was seen as having a negative impact on the academic success of Black students. These premade views and judgments were also not allowing non-Blacks to even have a chance to understand Black student’s cultural heritage, according to the African-American Student Association Web site.

The select group of students that was fighting for its rights was directly influenced by the events going on at a national scale. The 1960s was the peak for the civil rights movement. African-Americans, as well as a number of other minorities, all around the nation were demanding respect similar to the respect the students of Oklahoma State University were seeking, according to Stanfield.

 Eventually, African-Americans gained their respect on campus as they received a black counselor at Oklahoma State University and the African-American Student Association organization was formed. They were even given their own office in the multicultural student center than is now known as the inclusion center for academic excellence department. This department houses offices for the many other ethnic student organizations at Oklahoma State University including the Hispanic, Native American and Asian-American student associations. Today, the African-American Student Association is one of the largest multicultural student organizations on campus, according to Stanfield.

 However, the organization is not a national organization. It works within a council. The African-American Student Association has made its way to all of the Big 12 schools: Baylor University, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Oklahoma State University, Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, University of Colorado, University of Kansas, University of Missouri, University of Nebraska, University of Oklahoma and University of Texas. Baylor has the youngest organization, according to Stanfield.

Council members of each Big 12 school have meetings every three months or so to discuss important issues of their individual organizations. In the last week of February, the Big 12 schools hold a conference that all officers and members of the individual African-American student associations are allowed to attend. These conferences are held in order to improve professional development, academic development and the organizations as a whole. The last time the Big 12 conference was held at Oklahoma State University was two years ago. This year, the conference is being held at the University of Texas, according to Stanfield.

The African-American Student Association is a driving force that has established a number of related organizations at Oklahoma State University: African-American Business Students Association, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Burnin’ Black Gospel Choir, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Minority Women’s Association, National Pan-Hellenic Council, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and the Society of Black Engineers, Technologists, and Architects, according to the African-American Student Association Web site.

**Key Issues**

The goals that the African-American Student Association strives to accomplish are success in academics, success in recruitment and retention and a social support system providing networking for this specific body of students. It finds that it is unquestionably important to have interaction with all different types of people, but that it is also undeniably comfortable to be surrounded by people with similarities. The African-American Student Association attempts to be that comfort zone that new students are looking for, according to Stanfield.

During the fall semester, it has many events that it hosts in order to get more students involved in its network. “Welcome black week” is during the first week of school and is intended to promote awareness of the African-American Student Association to incoming freshman or new students that may want the opportunity to be involved. This week entails many social and learning events for the new students to participate in. It also hosts a “Poli-night” talent show and a soul food dinner throughout this semester. These events represent the respect the African-American Student Association has for its cultural heritage and its aspiration for teaching others about it, according to Stanfield.

During the spring, “Project Success” is an admissions event that is geared toward minorities. It is in the process of being organized and will be held on Feb. 19 this year. February also involves the Big 12 conference mentioned previously and elections for next year’s officers are held during the middle of the semester. Spring is a more laid back semester; there are more social occasions to allow the members to enjoy the networking part of the organization, according to Stanfield.

For example, the organization has begun a new alternating system for their meetings just this year. The African-American Student Association meets in the Student Union every Thursday at 7 p.m. The first week, a meeting will be general with an agenda and issues regarding events to discuss. Then, the next week will be something fun for the organization to do together. Recently, they had a “Battle of the Sexes Taboo” game night. Feedback from last semester state that there weren’t enough social events and this is the organization’s attempt to fix that, according to Stanfield.

**Key Players**

There are six key players of the African-American Student Association. Jason Johnson is the advisor and Stanfield is the president. There is also a co-advisor, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. These officers mainly work together with the president and advisor overseeing everything, according to Stanfield.

 The organization has no recruiting system. Minority groups on campus seem to be the comfort zone for many new students and these organizations are used to make their transition to a new school and environment smoother. However, some of the officers hold positions as student orientation leaders giving them a chance to get the organization out there by word of mouth. All of the officers work with admissions as well. The African-American Student Association is trying to reach out to many high schools in order to get more minority students as a whole to come to Oklahoma State University and to let them know of the support systems that the organization has to offer, according to Stanfield.

**Sources**:

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1. Oklahoma State University African-American Student Association Web site:

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African-American Student Association (Afro Am)

Organizational Chart

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**Advisor**:

Jason Johnson

**President**:

Devin Stanfield

**Vice President**:

Raechelle Reed

**Treasurer**:

Evan Townsend

**Secretary**:

JeVonna Caine

**Co-Advisor**:

Monica Dudley