Elaine Seay

Reporting Class News Story:

**Empowering the Powerful**

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**Empowering the Powerful**

The Black Student Government’s 33rd annual Big XII Conference, “Powerful Beyond Measure,” is at the University of Texas at Austin Feb. 25-28.

 The African-American Student Association’s council was founded in 1977 to hold conferences to discuss similar issues at their individual campuses. The University of Missouri students created the official conference in 1978, according to the 2010 Big XII Conference on black student government Web site. By 1979, the conference expanded to include the four Texas institutions and became known as the Big XII Conference.

 Devin Stanfield, Oklahoma State University’s African-American Student Association president, said they are taking 23 OSU students to the conference this year.

“The conference is a 4-day event geared towards educating, encouraging and empowering black students from the Big XII and other conferences by giving them tools to positively impact their predominately white campuses,” Stanfield said. “We have participated in this conference and council for more than 30 years.”

 The conference consists of the individual African-American Student Associations of all the Big XII schools. The head Big XII delegate for this year’s conference is Joseph Ballard, Stanfield said. The conference is a chance for all of the organizations from different institutions to gather and collaboratively provide support for one another. Support provided is in terms of succeeding as students of their institutions and as members of their community as a whole.

 The groups of students in the individual African-American Student Associations focus on allowing their own organizations to empower them to educate their campuses and allow other students a chance to gain a greater respect for black people and their cultural heritage, according to the African-American Student Association Web site.

Each year, an institute member of the Big XII will host the annual Big XII Conference on Black Student Government, according to the 2010 Big XII Conference on Black student government Web site. Jason Johnson, adviser of the OSU African-American Student Association, said that this conference is one of the few that is completely student ran.

“This is one of the most anticipated Big XII conferences in years,” Johnson said.

This year, there are a number of motivational speakers for this conference, including Joya Hayes, Kyle Clark, LeToya Luckett, Bakari Sellers, Leonard Moore and Gwen Webb-Hasan. These conferences are held to improve professional development, academic development and the institutions individual organizations as a whole, said Stanfield.

The Big XII Conference is executed “to provide strong, determined and courageous leadership and advocacy to affect our social and academic environments toward consideration of this community’s collective concerns and issues where it pertains to the educational, socio-cultural, economic, and spiritual well-being of this community,” according to the 2010 Big XII Conference on Black student government Web site.

 Christ Hill, a member of the OSU African-American Student Association, is unable to attend the conference, but still has high hopes in its success. “I anticipate good results and to hopefully form relationships with other African-American organizations and learn from them,” Hill said.

**Source Page**

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1. 2010 Big XII Conference on Black student government Web site
2. OSU African-American Student Association Web site