Fall 2022

Holding Space: Developing Strategies to Center Education, Belonging, and Inclusion in a Black Cultural Center at a Large Research-Intensive University

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Consultancy Project & Report

Organization: Gardner-Webb University College of Education

Project Title: HOLDING SPACE: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO CENTER EDUCATION, BELONGING, AND INCLUSION IN A BLACK CULTURAL CENTER AT A LARGE RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITY

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Defense Date: November 1, 2022

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NC State University

Approval

This consultancy project was submitted by Lorenzo Jameco McKenzie under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Dr. Elizabeth Jones, Faculty Advisor   Date
Gardner-Webb University

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NC State University

Acknowledgements

"The paradox of education is precisely this - that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated." — **James Baldwin**

Leadership: A word with many different meanings depending on whom you ask. However, to me, leadership means simply empowering others. The first leaders I would like to acknowledge are my parents, J. Lorenzo and Janet McKenzie. I am forever grateful for my parents' sacrifices to afford me many opportunities, encourage me to pursue my dreams, and push me to think critically and achieve greatness. Secondly, I would like to acknowledge my sister Jacovia and my family, immediate and extended both in The Bahamas and the USA, including my brothers of The Rho Zeta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, INC. The positive energy, love, and support have been invaluable to completing this consultancy project and doctoral program. Thirdly, friends and colleagues; Savannah Matherly, CJ Jackson Jr, Dr. Durell Hurst, Bri Elum, Dion Harry, Quashon Bunch, Treyvon Bishop, Richard Brown, and Micah McCall. I am thankful for your support over the last 3 years in this program, helping proofread papers and presentations and providing insights and encouragement that helped push me along to stay the course. Thank you, Sheri Swabb JD, Dr. Stephanie Helms Pickett, Lisa LaBarbera-Mascote, angela gay-audre, and the Office of Institutional Equity team at NC State University. Your efforts and leadership were essential to the empowerment of this project. I am grateful for my professors in the DEOL program and cohort members. I am thankful for your perspectives and engagement with me over the last 3 years in this EdD program. You have taught me essential nuggets about leadership. As a result, I have grown in my understanding of leadership and personal development. I am forever grateful for all involved in this process; you have truly empowered me to be and do my best to develop leadership and critical action-oriented scholarship to impact our society in the future.

Abstract

HOLDING SPACE: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO CENTER EDUCATION, BELONGING, AND INCLUSION IN A BLACK CULTURAL CENTER AT A LARGE RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITY. McKenzie, Lorenzo Jameco, 2022: Consultancy Project, Gardner-Webb University.

The story of Sankofa teaches us to look back to move forward. Concerning this consultancy project, it means that by gathering information from the past, experiences, joys, challenges, and insights, we would be able to reflect, synthesize the information, and chart a course of action for the prosperity and future of the African American Cultural Center at NC State University. As college campuses become more diverse and the need for robust diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in colleges and universities increases, this project seeks to provide a community engagement plan outlining comprehensive ways to build a significant Black cultural community center at a large research-intensive university. This project centers on education, belonging, and inclusion, providing a roadmap and action plan recommendation to successfully connect with and impact the Black community at a large historically and predominantly White institution. This project includes interviews with staff; focus groups with students and university employees; surveys of community members; and a review of current offerings, services, and programs of a Black cultural center and, using an appreciative inquiry and social systems theory, sought insights into what the future of the expansive Blackness in the center could be.

Keywords: community engagement, Black cultural center, diversity, equity, and inclusion, belonging, cultural education, Sankofa

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Purpose

The African American Cultural Center (AACC) at NC State University (NC State) is at a crossroads in its history at the university and is celebrating its 30th anniversary. The AACC operates as a hub for Blackness at NC State. It provides academic, social, cultural, and personal enrichment and support services for the university community, particularly Black folks. Located at the largest public institution in North Carolina, the AACC is one of four campus community centers under the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity (OIED) umbrella. The AACC, much like other offices/units within higher education, has been affected by staff turnover. Due to the staffing vacancies, the AACC recently underwent a new hiring process that resulted in all new staff members joining the team. All but one staff member in the AACC is new to the institution, with five of six folks having less than 2 years of experience at NC State. NC State is a predominantly and historically White institution. It is large public research intensive, land grant university with 37,500+ students, 2,500+ faculty, and 7,100+ staff.

As the AACC moves forward and envisions the next 30 years of its existence, this project seeks to help provide insights into what the community thinks about the AACC and identify needs as it relates to the office structure, offerings, physical environment, and programming role situated within OIED and NC State.

This report summarizes faculty, staff, student focus groups, individual interviews, and survey results for over 80 community members engaged with the AACC. In addition, it provides a roadmap on recommendations for the future of the AACC at NC State.

Technical Terms and Definitions

AACC	African American Cultural Center
OIED	Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity
Blackness	The expansive ways in which people of the global African diaspora show up and express themselves through culture, actions, beliefs, and traditions
Equity	The action of creating just opportunities, policies, and structures that create an outcome where people can thrive
Scholarship	The body of work that adds to the intellectual and social development of a people in a specific environment
Diversity	A variety of difference

Community	A feeling of connectedness between people in a particular space that aids in their ability to show up and feel empowered to be successful in a given environment
Inclusion	An act of developing policies and practices that would take into account the perspectives and ideas of otherwise marginalized folks
Hidden Curriculum	Unwritten ways of being that help students navigate campus being able to unlock access to unwritten rules of campus life and academics

1.2 Project Qualification

As a higher education student affairs practitioner, I was looking for a project that would allow me to extend my higher education knowledge and practice organizational change and development skills within the university setting. Additionally, I was seeking a project that would be focused on equity and inclusion to sharpen my diversity, equity, and inclusion knowledge and abilities. My consultancy project was a yearlong engagement from July 20, 2021, to July 20, 2022.

Before I started this project, my partnering organization experienced high turnover, and they were hiring a brand-new staff team for the organization. Student engagement with the AACC was low, and the staff would like to find ways to engage students, employees, and other community members in the space. The organization needed a roadmap for engaging with stakeholders and community members as it did not have much historical information or documents to reference the history or past actions of the AACC.

1.3 Project Complexity and Impact Assessment

My consultancy project with the AACC was significant because it required synthesizing information and experiences from faculty, staff, students, and community members from the entire NC State community. The project required creating focus groups, interview questions, and surveys to develop a community engagement plan that included a review of the current offerings of the AACC and recommendations and aspirations from community members about the future of the AACC.

As I developed the community engagement plan, I consulted with senior leaders in the OIED, staff of AACC, and student leaders who use and interact with the space.

1.3.1 Project Complexity

Using the project matrix document, my project scored 20 of 24 on the matrix, making it a significant project. This can be found as part of the Project Assessment Matrix in Appendix A.

The results were determined by selecting a rating of each of the criteria listed below.

Criteria	Complexity	Score
Stakeholders	Internal and external	3
Delivery timescale	12-18 months	4
Operational change	Significant restructuring of process and work areas	3
Contract complexity	Multiple contracts with known suppliers	3
In-house expertise	Have not done anything like this before	4
Dependencies	Link with other projects on which this project depends	3
TOTAL SCORE		**20**

All areas of the project complexity matrix were identified as scoring 3 or 4 of a possible 4 per criteria. This project was complex because it required internal and external partners for a year that linked with other projects. In addition, it requires significant restructuring to redevelop the AACC into a preeminent Black cultural center (BCC).

1.3.2 Project Impact

The project impact matrix measures how significant a project is to the partnering organization. The matrix has scores from 0 to 5 that measure significance. Using the project impact assessment matrix document, my project scored 14 of 15 on the matrix, making it a significant project. These results were determined by selecting a rating of each of the criteria listed below:

Criteria	Impact	Score
Strategic contribution	Very significant strategic impact	5
Return on investment (ROI)	< 1 year	5
Operational effectiveness	Some improvement across the whole organization	4
TOTAL SCORE		**14**

The project impact assessment matrix can be found as part of the Project Assessment Matrix in Appendix A.

1.4 Project Charter Information

As the doctoral consultant, I completed a project charter that outlines the goals for the project in partnership with the partnering organization, the AACC at NC State. This agreement outlined the organization's needs, objectives, and constraints; project stakeholders; risks; how the project will be completed; project benefits; and the timeline of what will be done within the project. The project site supervisor from AACC and the faculty advisor from Gardner-Webb University reviewed and agreed to this project charter agreement (see Appendix B for more information).

2. Project Objectives

2.1 Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives

2.1.1. Objective
The AACC objective in this project was to obtain a report that contains information from stakeholders on the current operations, strategies, and operations of the AACC and use that to help inform how the future of the AACC should look. This project was essential to the organization because as it is observing its 30th anniversary, the organization is looking to redefine the AACC to be adaptive to the current and future needs of the Black community at NC State. The organization was looking for attainable outcomes that would aid in AACC's program redevelopment and improvement.

2.1.2 Success Criteria
The partner organization, the AACC, measured success by developing a community engagement report containing tangible and attainable action plan recommendations of the inquiry with stakeholders of the AACC grounded in nuance reflection of community needs. Additionally, success is measured by a report that outlines information from people who use and should use the space, completed in an equitable way where no harm was done to community members, and the voices of community members were listened to.

2.2 Student's Personal Leadership Objectives

2.2.1 Objectives
Going into this consultancy project, I wanted to enhance my organizational development and change skills that focused on equity and inclusion while creating a space of belonging for Black community members at NC State. I also wanted to practice my skills in project management and leading a team through change to develop a report that reviews the AACC and provides recommendations to improve the reach and effectiveness of the AACC.

2.2.2 Success Criteria
The success of this project was measured by the effective practical completion of the community engagement report deliverable. This project allowed me to interact with internal and external stakeholders, interpret data, share observations and key findings to develop goals, and create realistic action plan recommendations. The recommendations would improve the reach of the AACC and develop a roadmap for what the future of the space can be.

3. Project Scope

3.1 Definitive Scope of Work
This project was responsible for a review of the AACC, which required listening to community members' perspectives through data collection, synthesizing the data, and

making recommendations on what the AACC should stop doing and continue doing.

3.2 Project Benefits

This project was beneficial because it created a guiding document for the AACC grounded in community-based thought through a participatory action research process. The report allowed for voices from various stakeholders within the university setting to be heard. The report generated synthesized data that helped to move the organization forward.

3.3 SMART Goals

In completing this project, three overall SMART goals were created to address the needs of the AACC. The completion of the SMART goals would factor into the creation of a community engagement report deliverable.

SMART Goal	Goal	Deadline
Goal 1	Assess current AACC using appreciative inquiry.	July 1, 2022
Goal 2	Create a survey or interview questions to gauge what students, staff, and other community stakeholders look for in a thriving and successful AACC.	April 20, 2022
Goal 3	Create proposed recommendations for new initiatives regarding AACC operations and events based on feedback from students, staff, and community partners	July 25, 2022

4. Disciplined Inquiry

4.1 Introduction, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology

This project was designed as critical participatory action research, intentionally including AACC stakeholders in the inquiry, decision-making, and project execution. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), critical participatory action research is a study in which participants in the study act to a great degree as co-researchers. The purpose of critical participatory action research studies is "intended to challenge structured power relations" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 58). The project was managed by me and co-constructed and executed by members of the OIED and AACC staff. The project utilized tenants of the appreciative inquiry process: discover, dream, design, and destiny coupled with Getzel-Guba's social systems theory (Sollenne,1978). Appreciative inquiry takes a possibility perspective rather than focusing on an organization's weaknesses or deficits (Grant & Humphries, 2006). The appreciative inquiry process was used to form focus groups and interview questions to engage stakeholders throughout the 5-stage process.

Sollenne (1978) suggested that in Getzel-Guba's social systems theory, organizations act as a social system, and the organization's interrelated dimensions affect the observable outcome of its employees. In developing this study, I used this theoretical perspective to form the question prompts that the AACC and OIED staff were asked in their interviews.

As the primary researcher for this project, before beginning the project, I completed the

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Certifications for Graduate School of Education Investigators (Appendix C). The information obtained through the CITI training helped to ground my research practice in legal and ethical decision-making protocols. Through an iterative process, I first observed the AACC, reviewed documents, and then worked with the project team to design data collection strategies to document the community's perspectives on the state of the AACC and glean ideas about how the future of the AACC should look.

This mixed methods approach project included the following data collection methods:

- Individual interviews with staff of AACC and senior leadership in OIED
- Three focus groups named feedback sessions:
    - Two for students and student organizations
    - One for faculty and staff
- A community-wide survey went out to over 200 campus stakeholders with relations and connections to the AACC.

Included in Appendices D and E are questionnaires asked of the participants. Appendix F contains a full review of the data collected and the results of the data.

4.2 Hypothesis

The AACC was at a crossroads in its existence as a center on campus and was operating without a guiding document or knowledge of community needs. Therefore, the hypothesis for my consultancy was, "How might the AACC meet the needs of the community at NC State?" During my project, I collected, reviewed data, and interpreted responses to surveys, interviews, and focus groups to answer the hypothesis. Once the information was synthesized, I put it in a community engagement report (deliverable document), provided it along with action plan recommendations, and shared it with my partner organization.

4.3 Research Questions

In conceptualizing this project, the following research questions guided the action research:

1. What strategies, practices, traditions, and signature events should the AACC carry forward or implement to make the space and services offered more preeminent to meet the needs of the NC State community?

2. How does the current space, amenities, resources, and structure of the AACC effectively address the needs of the NC State community?

3. How can the AACC broaden its reach in the NC State community?

4.4 Literature Review

The professional literature review of the impact of BCCs on Black student experience revealed many strategies that have been used to meet the needs of Black students at predominantly White institutions across the United States. The review included the review of numerous peer-reviewed sources compromising books and articles covering BCCs and

their significance to student development. In addition, the literature review answered the question, "How do Black cultural center services, practices, and structures benefit student and community success and impact the Black student experience at predominantly White institutions?"

The full literature review can be found in Appendix G.

5. Continuous Improvement Systems

5.1 Continuous Improvement Planning

The partnering organization plans to implement the recommendations co-constructed with me. The significant challenge of redeveloping more robust offerings in services, programming, support, and resources for the AACC would be implemented by implementing the recommendations. The following chart outlines the action plan recommendations that will provide continuous improvement to the organization.

Action Plan Recommendations
✓ Consider examining and proposing a new name for the AACC
✓ Creation of Faculty/Staff Mentoring Program for Students
✓ Creation of Marketing and Outreach Plan for AACC
✓ Create more formalized partnerships and memorandums with Depts, Offices, and Units in the Raleigh Area
✓ Development of a comprehensive Academic Engagement Strategy
✓ Creation of a data tracking system to analyze the work of the AACC
✓ Implementation of new Mission Vision Values
✓ Explore creating a Development Role
✓ Create a Black Leadership Certificate Program

5.2 Continuous Improvement Actions

The AACC, my partner organization, plans to adopt all the recommendations outlined in the chart above. They intend to begin by implementing a new mission, vision, and values, and creating a faculty and staff mentoring program for students in partnership with the Inclusive Excellence Strategic Practice office of the OIED. Based on my recommendations, the AACC director has begun setting up meetings with identified stakeholders for each recommendation task to explore putting them into practice.

5.3 Continuous Improvement Feedback

I have recommended that my partner organization use the community engagement project report deliverable as a guide to help inform how they might implement these recommendations for the AACC. I suggest that an open process that includes community perspectives along with its implementation is key to the success of the implementation of this project. Hosting focus groups and interviewing stakeholders as decisions are made about the future are essential to getting buy-in and support from the community the project seeks to engage.

5.4 Continuous Improvement Implementation
This project is about creating space, belonging, and community to primarily educate and serve the Black community at NC State.

I believe that the following recommendations are critical to inform the planning process for achieving positive change in the AACC:
- consider examining and proposing a new name for the AACC
- implementation of new mission, vision, and values
- creation of marketing and outreach plan for AACC

I see these three as foundational steps on which all other recommendations will be built. The AACC currently produces good work, but because of the needs identified in the bullets above, much of that success and good work is overshadowed. In addition, there are barriers to entry to serve the community the AACC is designed to help.

6. Deliverables

6.1 To Partnering Organization From Candidate
Two deliverables were produced in furtherance of the consultancy project.

1. **A Community Engagement Project Website** – This webpage helped inform the community of the work of this project, what it was about, why it was significant, what we intended to do, and how they could get involved (Appendix H).

2. **Community Engagement Project Report –** This report contained synthesized data from focus groups, AACC staff interviews, and community member perspectives on the current practices of the AACC, traditions, and needs for the future. The community engagement project report also included a roadmap of action plan recommendations based on the nuanced understanding of the community and feedback from an iterative engagement process. The community engagement project report outlined responses to the following SMART goals in comprehensive ways:
   a. assess current AACC using appreciative inquiry
   b. create a survey or interview questions to gauge what students, staff, and other community stakeholders look for in a thriving AACC
   c. create proposed recommendations for new initiatives regarding AACC operations and events based on feedback from students, staff, and community partners (Appendix F)

6.2 Deferred Deliverables
In the original version of the project charter, the partnering organization and I set out to include the following additional items in the community engagement project report deliverable:
- a new mission, vision, values
- theoretical framework recommendation

However, after further discussion with the partnering organization and considering the

timeline constraints of the project, we decided to defer these deliverables and transform them into recommendations that could be springboarded from the information contained within the final version of the community engagement project report.

7. Communications Plan

A consistent and frequent communication plan was critical to the success of this project; therefore, I met stakeholders with the following intentions:

- On a bi-weekly basis, I would share updates and milestones achieved with the project host and site supervisor.
- Monthly meetings with the AACC staff to share updates on the project's status.
- Quarterly the project team would meet to discuss upcoming goals and next steps with the project.
- Once per semester, I would meet with the project faculty advisor to give updates on the project's progress.

7.1 Communications Plan Development

The communication plan was created in a way that centered on consistent and frequent communication to aid in the consultancy's success and completion of desired deliverables. Most communication occurred directly via email or Google documents, with a significant number of meetings and interactions done in a face-to-face manner in person. By adhering to the communication plan, the team could meet the project's needs and adjust as needed to host information gathering sessions and complete a review of data that was synthesized into the project deliverables.

7.2 Stakeholder Engagement Plan

All the stakeholders played an essential role in the success of the project. They all impacted the completion of the project developments and deliverables. The role of each stakeholder and their impact on the project are identified in the chart below.

Stakeholder Name	How	Engagement	Value
African American Cultural Center (AACC)	This organization was the partner organization with the significant challenge that my consultancy project addressed.	Through email, Google documents, and in-person meetings, I engaged the staff and leadership of the AACC. As a result, the team of the AACC engaged in organizing meetings and focus groups for members of the NC State community.	This stakeholder was invaluable to the success of the project. Its cooperation and openness led to the completion of this consultancy.
Gardner-Webb University – DEOL faculty	Gardner-Webb University faculty in the DEOL program was my project	Faculty at Gardner-Webb engaged through in-person and virtual meetings throughout the	Gardner-Webb University DEOL faculty at Gardner-Webb played a very

	sponsor and served as my advisor helping with the project's completion.	life cycle of this project. Meetings helped to clarify goals and action steps and share updates and status reports on the project.	integral role in this project's completion as the project sponsor.
Project Manager	I served as the project manager for this consultancy. In my role as project manager, I served as a connector and lead in finding solutions to the significant problem of the partner organization.	I worked to organize the project to address the needs and find solutions to the significant problem of the organization, in addition to gathering information and synthesizing data to create an action plan. recommendations.	I served a valuable role as the lead person organizing this project, bringing it to completion and developing deliverables that unite the whole project.
Students	Students are the primary target audience of the services of the African American Cultural Center. Student perspectives were key data points used to inform the action plan recommendations.	Students were engaged through feedback sessions (focus groups) and surveys.	The engagement from students was invaluable in the success of this project. Their perspectives and feedback about the AACC helped to inform the deliverable.
NC State community members, faculty, and staff	Community members, faculty, and staff were the secondary target audience of the AACC.	These folks were engaged through focus groups, interviews, and surveys.	The engagement from this group was valuable as their responses and perspectives helped inform the deliverable.

8. Risks

8.1 Mitigation and Contingency

Risk Description	Mitigation Plan (what to do to avoid the risk occurring)	Contingency Plan (what to do if the risk occurs)	Impact (what the impact will be to the project if the risk occurs)	Likelihood of occurrence (e.g., %, or high/medium/low)
Ongoing physical/social	This risk will be mitigated by	If there are issues arising	This risk could delay and/or	Medium

distancing and COVID-19 limitations – The pandemic has changed the way the universities operate, limiting student contact and in-person opportunities. The ever-changing nature of the pandemic challenges the ability of the project host/site and participants to be accessible.	creating opportunities for community members to participate in the action research both in person and virtually, therefore, reducing the threat that the pandemic may have on the success of the project.	from the risks identified, I am able to use existing documentation and access to staff of the AACC to help complete the project and still provide the results needed to make a successful project.	change the ways in which data and feedback would be collected for this project. However, the project could still be able to be completed, albeit in a different manner.	
Fear about purpose and agenda for AACC – There could be a perceived fear about the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion at a large public institution as disruptive and agitating. This negative perception could stifle the advocacy work and make the purpose of the plan cloudy.	The project host and I meet regularly to make sure that this is mitigated, additionally the goals and outcomes of the project align with the larger university diversity metrics, goals, and outcomes. The project is supported at the university cabinet level and the VP of the area is aware and on board with the project.	If there are issues arising from the risks identified, I am able to use existing documentation and access to staff of the AACC to help complete the project and still provide the results needed to make a successful project.	If there were political or structural impediments in completing this project, that may have slowed down the progress made in the project and put up barriers to completing it, however, as long as the project is supported by the project host and senior leadership at the university, the project would persist.	Medium
Openness and communication with community partners – Diversity and inclusion topics can be viewed as	Making the community members aware of the protocols to protect individuals'	If there are issues arising from the risks identified, I can use existing documentation	If this risk had occurred, it would have had a very negative impact on the	Medium

uncomfortable conversations and sometimes polarizing. A risk could exist where community members are reluctant to share their true feelings and experiences due to fear of discussing these topics.	identities and anonymity in the data collection process will honor openness and communication in the process. Additionally, we are developing a website that updates community members as the project progresses.	and access to the staff of the AACC to help complete the project and still provide the results needed to make a successful project.	success of the project. It would have limited the actionable data and true insights of the stakeholders.	

8.2 Constraints

The AACC is situated within the Campus Community Centers in the OIED that is structurally under the purview of the executive VP and provost. Many individuals make up interested parties for this project. There may be other offices or branches within the university that may be doing similar work. Additionally, all the individuals involved have additional responsibilities and roles on campus that may limit their ability to pay significant attention to completing this project.

9. Budget

The following chart breaks down the cost of completing this consultancy project. The budget represents the expenditures needed to complete this project's data collection and deliverables. All funding for this project was derived from the AACC allocated budget, with money approved through purchasing authorization to be used appropriately.

Project Needs	Description	Cost
Gift cards for student survey respondents	Five $25 Amazon gift cards were acquired as an incentive for participating in the survey.	$125
Meals at feedback sessions	$73.07 Subway $25.48 Dominoes $515.54 Broken Egg Restaurant	$614.09
Total Budget		$739.09

10. Analysis and Recommendations

Engaging in this consultancy with the AACC has been an insightful experience. The interviews, focus groups, and survey results indicate that the AACC has a strong presence at the university. The Black community it directly supports is integral to campus life and its

sense of community and belonging at NC State.

Below are excerpts from the Community Engagement Project Report (Appendix F) that summarize the results of the surveys, focus groups, and interviews done in this project.

Through semi-structured open-ended questions, staff of the AACC and OIED Campus Community Center Leadership were asked a series of questions. Below each subheading are the themes and critical points observed in their responses.

How the Staff Perceives the AACC Role

The staff believes that AACC is a place for
- Resources – to be a connecting place; a hub of resources and direction
- Black faculty, staff, and students – to belong, have a space to exist, and just be unapologetically Black
- Education and Learning – get your questions answered, learn about Blackness, study, and be enriched
- Reprieve, Celebration, and Affirmation – through the care of the community, a break from the larger campus community, create joy, feel seen in the university
- Community and Connection – be around others, build relationships
- Opportunities – for both Black and non-Black folks alike

Overwhelmingly, staff members within the AACC see their roles as integral to the Black student experience and see themselves as facilitators of learning through programming, advising, and helping students and student organizations. In addition, the staff see themselves as good stewards of the physical space, creating opportunities for students to meet, engage with each other, and attend engaging programs.

Student Perspectives
The AACC hosted three feedback sessions as focus groups on the AACC and its programmatic offerings, two sessions for students (undergraduate and graduate) and one session for faculty and staff. This report section will share significant themes and findings from those focus groups.

Student Feedback Sessions
The student feedback sessions were set up in two parts. The first was an opportunity for students to engage with the programs and events planned for the upcoming academic year and offer feedback on the experiences offered. The second part was a debrief conversation about their experiences and engagement with the AACC.

In the first part of the feedback sessions, students shared significant appreciation themes for and support of all the planned events. Ideas surfaced, such as enhanced collaboration with Black student organizations for events and opportunities for Black student organizations to develop leadership skills and help with the transition. Other popular ideas were creating a service trip and connecting with Black alums. Students also shared that branching outside NC State and working with Raleigh area organizations and HBCUs could be beneficial.

Part 2 of the feedback sessions was a debrief. Below is vital information shared regarding the Black student experience with the AACC.

The following themes emerged when asked what comes to mind when they think about the AACC:

- **Home** – Many focus group participants shared that the AACC made them feel at home. They share a feeling of warmth and safety within the space.
- **A reprieve** – Students share that coming to the AACC space allows them to take their masks off (figuratively) compared to other spaces. They can be their authentic selves and feel welcomed, which is a solid foundation to return to.
- **Learning** – Students shared that the AACC is a space for them to study; they use the study rooms, and because of the design of the space, they are not overwhelmed by too many people overcrowding the space compared to Talley Student Union or the University Libraries.

Usage of the Space
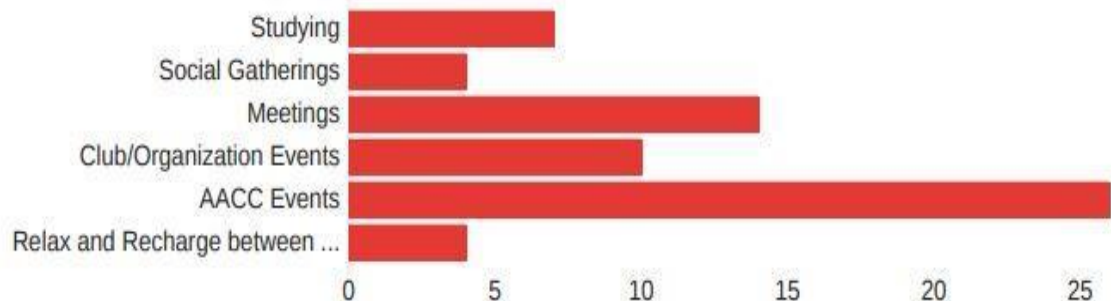
Q12 - What is the primary reason that you use the AACC space for? (Select One)
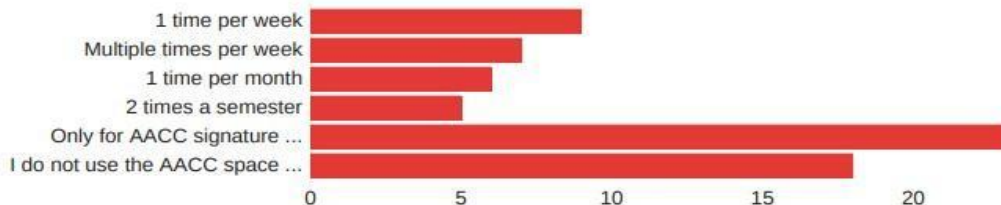
Q13 - What is the secondary reason that you use the AACC space for? (Select One)
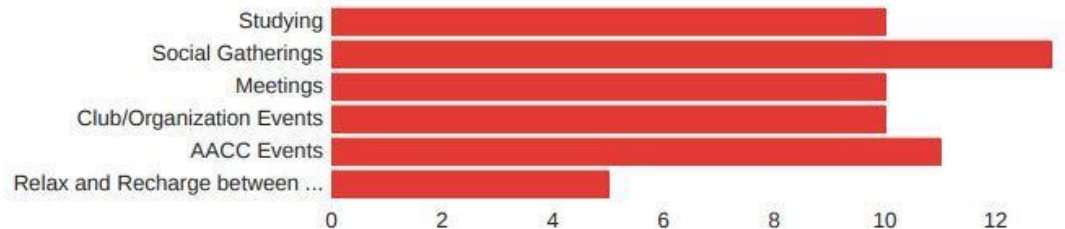
The primary and secondary reasons people use the AACC, according to the survey results, are to attend AACC events and social gatherings.

Considering the secondary reasons people use the AACC – studying, meetings, and club/organizational events tied for runner-up in this category, indicating that the space has a variety of uses for the NC State community.

Q14 - How often do you use the AACC? (Select One)

Community members shared that they use the space most often primarily for signature programs and events (34%), while nearly 27% of respondents to the survey shared that they do not currently use the AACC.

When asked to rank what the participants thought was the most important role of the AACC, they listed the following:
1. to provide an enclave for Black folx at NC State
2. to be a space for community building
3. to teach, learn about, and appreciate Black culture in its diverse forms
4. to be an academic resource
5. to be a meeting space

Enhancing the Reach of AACC
Survey respondents were asked what the AACC should consider doing or incorporating to

enhance its reach with the NC State community. The respondents were given a list of options; their top responses to this question can be found in the tiers below:

Tier 1 Connections with faculty and staff or other NC State resources

Tier 2 Fund laid-back events/social gatherings
Workshops and training
Leadership development opportunities

Tier 3 Race and gender intersectional events
Encourage class sessions to be held in AACC
Partner with Raleigh area organizations to host events
Community service and volunteering opportunities
Pop culture events

Openness to Change

Respondents to the survey were asked if, in honoring tradition, "Do you believe things should always be done the way they have always been done?"

The majority of respondents shared openness to change. One respondent expanded on their response with, "Not all students…. Attend the university will require the same needs and interests," indicating the importance of being student-centered in how the AACC operates and makes decisions to serve the community better.

In synthesizing all the information, the following are the recommendations to advance the AACC.

Action Plan Recommendation	Importance and Impact	Analysis of Data	Stakeholders involved with recommendation	Time Frame to Complete
Consider examining and proposing a new name for the AACC	This action plan recommendation would help broaden the reach of the culture center, reduce barriers of entry and highlight the expansive and inclusive work around Blackness that the AACC embodies and empowers.	Through the research, there appears to be an idea folk within the community feel as though they were unaware of the AACC being a space for them to belong to or engage with. The name African American Cultural Center is limiting and does not fully tell the story of the intersectional and many ways Blackness shows up and is supported within the AACC. The current name serves as a barrier to Black students and faculty/staff engagement who may not identify with African Americans or feel that this marker does not represent them, particularly Afro-Latinx, Caribbean, African or other members of the Black diaspora from around the world. There is a disconnect	AACC Director Senior Director, Campus Community Centers Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity	12 Months

		between the expansive Blackness lifted up and supported in the space and the perceptions associated with the AACC's name.		
Creation of Faculty/Staff Mentoring Program for Students	This action plan recommendation would catalyze more student and faculty/staff interaction. Through the interaction, students would foster important relationships with disciplinary professionals in their majors, increase faculty staff engagement in the AACC and teach students the *hidden curriculum* of NC State.	Survey and focus group data from students and faculty/staff indicate a yearning for students to engage more with Faculty and Staff. This type of engagement would be beneficial as it helps students learn about and identify student leaders and elevate their skills and disciplinary acumen by being engaged with faculty and staff in their areas of study. This recommendation will also increase faculty and staff engagement within the space. Additionally, this relationship could be beneficial to teaching Black students the *Hidden curriculum* - that is, how they navigate an institution that was not built with them in mind.	AACC Assistant Director Inclusive Excellence and Strategic Practice Faculty & Staff College Diversity Directors	3 to 6 Months
Creation of Marketing and Outreach Plan for AACC	This action plan recommendation would inform the NC State community about the impactful resources, support, and services that the AACC offers and help more people know about the space as a hub for Blackness.	The data suggests more work needs to be done regarding the marketing of the AACC and its offerings to reach more NC State. More targeted outreach strategies could be beneficial to helping the AACC yield more engagement and get the word out about the impactful work it already does.	All AACC Staff OIED Marketing Senior Director, Campus Community Centers	6 Months
Create more formalized partnerships and memorandums with Depts, Offices, and Units in the Raleigh Area	This action plan recommendation actualizes the concept that the AACC is a hub for Blackness. It brings together the expertise and collegiality from across the university and reduces siloes,	The concept of the AACC being a hub for Blackness emerged as a consistent theme in this study. As a hub for Blackness, the AACC should look into developing formalized relationships with other offices, departments, and units both at NC State and beyond that would potentially affect the experience of Black students and community members at NC State. By creating these memorandums, the work of	College Diversity Directors AACC Staff Division of Academic and Student Affairs Units	6 to 9 Months

	positioning the AACC in a more front-facing position.	supporting Black students will not be siloed into just what is done in OIED through the AACC. Still, it would be organized as an important component and responsibility of the university and its many offices and units.		
Development of a comprehensive Academic Engagement Strategy	This action plan recommendation helps embolden the AACC and connect it to the academic mission of NC State. Survey results listed academic engagement as an important role for the AACC. This recommendation will prepare community members to become culturally responsive leaders and academics.	Survey results listed academic engagements in the AACC's top three most important roles. The AACC should create a comprehensive academic engagement plan that includes the development of educational workshops (for on-campus and greater Raleigh community), courses held in the AACC, and center-sponsored experiential learning opportunities that bring learning outside of the traditional classroom, such as culturally relevant trips and immersion experiences. This strategy would further embolden the connection between the AACC and the academic mission of NC State and prepare and inform folx to be culturally responsive learners and academics.	AACC Staff Africana Studies & Interdisciplinary Studies Depts Inclusive Excellence and Strategic Practice College Diversity Directors	12 to 24 Months
Creation of a data tracking system to analyze the work of the AACC	This action plan recommendation would develop a strategic way to gauge how the current services and offerings are impacting the community and highlight gaps that might exist to use data to impact what kinds of further support or targeted outreach might be needed to positively impact the Black community at NC State.	The focus groups, particularly with the staff of the AACC, emerged a theme that suggests there needs to be more analytics to understand who's needs are being served with the current format and offerings of the AACC and also what communities might the AACC focus on to address gaps that exist. By developing a data tracking system, student and community engagement could measure the efficacy of programming and resources, leading to more targeted engagement opportunities and outreach efforts to provide additional support to more of the NC State community, specifically to underserved Black NC State populations at the margins.	AACC Director Assessment Office AACC Administrative Support Specialist	3 to 6 Months

Implementation of new Mission Vision Values	This action plan recommendation would more accurately bring together the current and future practices of the AACC to tell the story of how the space is a hub for Blackness; in education, community building, and resources.	The study suggests there should be a deeper look into the AACC's mission, vision, and values and should be moving forward. Many different voices and options have emerged regarding what the AACC should do. A common thread was the idea of being a Hub for Blackness at NC State and that the AACC's work is expansive, including more than just students but the larger NC State community and the Raleigh community in which the university is situated. The current mission, vision, and values do not highlight this unique distinction, and work should be done to bring the guiding documents and philosophy of the AACC into alignment with the ethos and needs of the community.	AACC Director	12 months
Explore creating a Development Role	This action plan recommendation would lift up and provide support to the operations of the AACC by being able to garner major gifts from benefactors to improve the student experience, provide capital to help in unforeseen emergencies, decrease socioeconomic barriers for engagement with high-impact practices and lessen the burden on students having to think about the financial aspects of being a student at NC State.	Through the focus groups of the students and engagement with the AACC staff, the need to have more financial resources cultivated specifically for the success of Black students at NC State emerged. Through the development of a development role within OIED and AACC, there could be a focused engagement on getting benefactors to give to the AACC and organizing ongoing fundraising activities that would help retain and support Black students successfully navigating the NC State Community.	AACC Director Senior Director, Campus Community Centers Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity	12 to 24 months

Create a Black Leadership Certificate Program	This action plan recommendation would address a need identified by students by developing a formalized way of teaching them transferable skills in leading student leadership and project management.	The creation of leadership development opportunities emerged as a Tier two idea that garnered significant support as an activity the AACC should consider doing to expand its reach within the NC State Community. Additionally, the focus groups with students identified the need for Black student organizations to have more intentional engagement with AACC staff to help them develop skills to run their organizations effectively. Through creating a Black Leadership Certificate program, students and potential student organizational leaders can develop strong transferable leadership skills that would improve the student organizations' success and the student efficiency in project management that could be used beyond the college environment.	AACC Director AACC Assistant Director Student Leadership & Engagement	12 Months

Appendix F contains the full results and a review of the data collected.

11. Reflection

11.1 Professional Learning

Through completing this project, I deepened my understanding of project management; how to lead others through change; and how diversity, equity, and inclusion offices operate. I was able to use my skills in change management to help develop strategies to help advance the AACC. I also developed data collection and interpretation skills to develop action plan recommendations that are both attainable and tangible. In completing this project, I was able to be embedded within the AACC and get to know the inner workings of a diversity, equity, and inclusion-focused center, which allowed me to lead projects and interface with unit leaders and cabinet-level leadership in institutional diversity and equity. This experience helped me have a firsthand perspective on what the AACC does and prepared me to consider what it would take to be a director of a diversity, equity, and inclusion-focused center in the future.

This consultancy project helped me think beyond programming – an area of student affairs I am familiar with and comfortable doing. It allowed me to tap into my strengths in strategic thinking, futuristic thinking, intellectualization, ideation, and significance. These strengths were developed through this program and were integral to the success of the consultancy and the doctoral program.

11.2 Personal Development

This consultancy and the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program has genuinely helped me redefine what it means to be a leader and how leadership functions.

Before entering the program, I likened leadership to people who tell others what to do and make decisions in boardrooms. However, after participating in this doctoral program, I am much more aware of the importance relationship building has on the leadership process. I have also learned to be more open with others, okay with appropriately delegating tasks, and a more outwardly empathetic leader. At the beginning of this program, my top five strengths were relator, strategic, input, individualization, and positivity. However, at the end of the program, the following emerged as my top five strengths: strategic, futuristic, intellectualization, ideation, and significance.

I believe that this program has developed me into a more well-rounded thinker and leader. I am more interested in system thinking and creating strategies to address complex adaptive problems for organizations instead of technical issues. Additionally, this program has taught me the importance of balancing tasks and relationship orientation. It is not enough to get the job done; it is more important to ensure that we engage the right people with the right skill sets to develop solutions to problems.

Personally, this program has developed me into a more decisive strategic leader, with more confidence in my knowledge, skills, and abilities to impact positive change. I am empowered to make ethical leadership decisions and equipped with high emotional intelligence and the language and theory to inform my leadership decisions.

Appendix A

Project Assessment Matrix

Project Assessment Rubric

Project Manager Name _____ Jameco McKenzie_____

DEOL Cohort __ Charlotte 2022_____ -

The Project Assessment tool is used to assess the complexity within a project, and to give it a weighting so that it can be defined as minor, medium or major.
It is a four step process, described in full below. Resources will also have an impact on priorities, either in terms of operating within the budget or on incompatible demands personnel.

1. How to use the Project Assessment tool

Step 1: Does it meet the base criteria?
1.1 First, you should decide whether the proposed piece of work fits the base criteria for a project. A **project**, simply put, is a piece of work to produce **a specific, one-off product** of some kind that is not part of routine work.

Step 2: Project Impact

1.2 For each of the three criteria listed in column 1, decide where the project fits – for example if the expected ROI (return on investment) is between three to four years you would score 2 against this criterion.
1.3 Add up all the scores according to the column in which each selection sits – the result should fall between the possible minimum of 0 (everything scoring 0 points) and maximum of 15 (everything scoring 5 points).

Step 3: Decide on level of complexity
1.4 Consider the overall complexity of the project. You follow a similar process to that outlined in steps 1.2 – 1.3 but using the complexity grid on page 5 instead.
1.5 The grid on page 5 does not explicitly include a zero score column, but zero scores are still possible – e.g. if delivery timescale is less than a month you would score zero against Delivery Timescale.
1.6 Add up all the scores according to the column in which each selection sits – the result should fall between the possible minimum of 0 (everything scoring 0 points) and maximum of 24 (everything scoring 4 points).

Step 4: Decide on project type
1.7 Enter the outcomes from steps 2 and 3 on the grid. Depending on which zone your project falls into, you can now determine whether it is Not a Project, Minor, Medium or Major.

Guidance on use of the Assessment Matrix criteria:
Strategic contribution – systems that have to be delivered in order to deliver agreed organizational strategic objectives. For an impact score of 3 or 4 points it must be possible to demonstrate within the Business Case that the project has a direct impact upon the

Project Assessment Rubric

achievement of the priorities (i.e. it isn't simply linked to them; the strategic priorities are to some extent dependent upon the project in order to be achieved).

ROI and timescale – at the initial stages of project planning it is usually difficult to provide accurate estimates of ROI and timescale. Thus if a project's estimate is close to an upper boundary, it will be safer to score it in the higher level since projects usually end up costing more (i.e. having a lesser ROI) and taking longer than originally anticipated.

Organizational effectiveness – factors to consider are the degree to which existing organizational processes will improve and whether major restructuring may be required. Do not consider cost savings here as this is built into the ROI criterion and you must avoid double counting.

Operational change – this is closely allied to Organizational effectiveness, but whereas the former looks at impact in terms of positive improvement, Operational change looks at the issue of how much change is happening (the greater the degree of change, the more difficult it will be to achieve). For example if you have scored 3 against organizational effectiveness (Improves work of whole department) it's extremely unlikely that you will score less than 3 on Operational change.

Project Impact Assessment Matrix

Criteria	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Strategic Contribution	None	Contributes indirectly to the org. mission	Contributes indirectly to >1 strategic themes	Contributes directly to 1 strategic theme	Contributes directly to >1 strategic theme	Very Significant strategic Impact
ROI	>5 years	4-5 years	3-4 years	2-3 years	1-2 years	<1 year
Operational Effectiveness	None	Improves work of a small group of staff < 6	Improves work of a large team of staff > 5	Improves work of whole department	Some improvement across whole organization	Significant improvement across whole organization

Project Impact Assessment Points ___14___ (0 – 15)

Project Assessment Rubric

Project Complexity Matrix

Criteria	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
Delivery Timescale (months) – 10%	1-6	6-12	12-18	> 18
Stakeholders 20%	Internal and within single organizational area	Internal across more than one business area	Mainly external	Internal and external
Operational change 15%	Very minimal	Some new processes and possible some re-training	Significant restructure of processes and work areas	Major change/ large scale restructure, outsourcing
Contract complexity 20%	No new contracts required	Single contract with known supplier	Multiple contracts with known suppliers	Contract(s) with new suppliers(s)
In-house expertise 20%	Have done this before many times	Have done this before once or twice	Have done similar before, but not the same	Have not done anything like this before
Dependencies 15%	Very minimal links with other projects	Links with other projects but little impact	Links with other projects upon which this project depends	Other projects depend upon this project

Project Complexity Matrix Points __20__ (5 – 24)

Project Assessment Rubric

Mark the intersection on the matrix below using an X
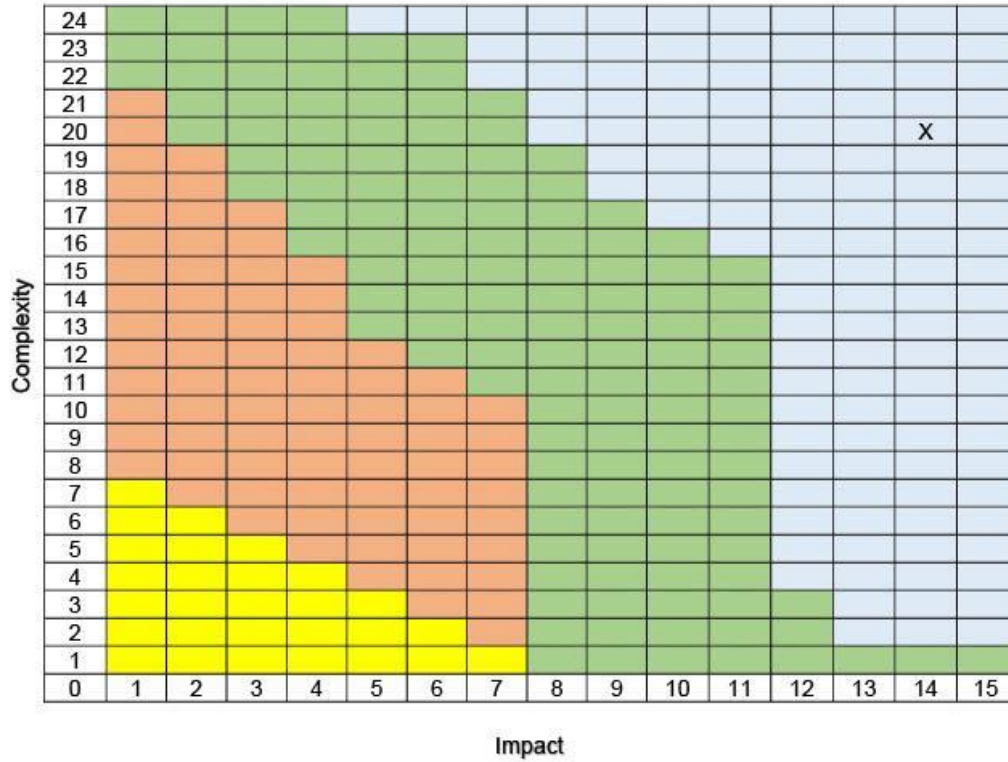
	Not a Project
	Minor Project
	Medium Project
	Major Project

Matrix Result _____ **Major Project**__

Appendix B

Project Charter

CONSULTANCY PROJECT CHARTER

	1. General Project Information			
	Project Title:	**Holding Space**: Centering Equity, Justice & Inclusion in a Black Cultural Community Center at a Large Research Intensive University		
	Project Host(s):	**angela gay-audre**, NC State University Director- African American Cultural Center		
	Project Sponsor (GWU):	**Dr. Elizabeth Jones**, Faculty Advisor – Gardner Webb University DEOL Program		
	Project Manager:	**Jameco McKenzie, M.Ed.**	**Date:**	20 July 2021
	Project Description	As college campuses become more diverse and the need for robust diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in colleges and universities increases, this project seeks to provide a strategic plan outlining comprehensive ways to build a significant Black Cultural Community Center at a Large Research Intensive University.		

	2. Project Participants and Roles (add or delete lines as needed)			
	Name	**Role**	**Telephone**	**E-mail**
Project Manager:	Jameco McKenzie, M.Ed	Project Manager	910-920-5250	Mckenzie.jameco242@gmail.com
Team Members:	angela gay-audre, M.A	Project Host/Site Supervisor	919-513-2446	acgay@ncsu.edu
Team Members:	Forthcoming	Assistant Director, AACC		
Team Members:	Isaiah Lucas	Program Coordinator, AACC		
Team Members:	Hanna Amme	Library Coordinator, AACC		
Team Members:	Staci Roseboro	Administrative Support Specialist, AACC		
Team Members:	Kristen Russell	Graduate Assistant, AACC		
Optional Team Member	Sheri Schwab, J.D., M.Ed.	Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity		
Optional Team Member	Thomas Witherspoon, Ph.D	Senior Director, CCC		

3. Stakeholders *(e.g., those with a significant interest in or who will be significantly affected by this project)*

The NC State University Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity as a whole would be a significant stakeholder in this project. More specifically, African American Cultural Center within the Campus Community Centers.

4. Project Purpose Statement

Project Purpose *Describe the need this project addresses.*

As the African American Cultural Center begins to operate with new leadership and complete hiring processes for staff, this project creates a strategic plan for the African American Cultural Center at NC State University. By completing this project, we will identify the community needs related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and create a road map of recommendations for the African American Cultural Center for programming, theoretical framework, mission, vision, values, and staffing considerations. In addition, this project will link back to the strategic goals of the university and the larger Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity (OIED).

Resources *Describe the resources made available by the project host for this project.*

1. Access to the African American Cultural Center and a workspace within African American Cultural Center to meet with stakeholders and committee members;
2. Access to documents related to African American Cultural Center operations and everyday experiences; 3. Access to general office supplies and printing;
4. Access to students, staff, faculty, and other stakeholders who are affiliated with or have recognition of the African American Cultural Center;

Project Deliverables *List the high-level "products" to be created (e.g., improved xxxx process, employee manual on yyyy)*

1. **A Strategic Plan for the current African American Cultural Center that includes:**

    i. Review of the current African American Cultural Center (appreciative inquiry)

    ii. Complete an environmental scan of African American Cultural Center

    iii. Development of a Strategic Purpose for the center (Mission/Vision/Values/Goals)

    iv. Recommendations of a Theoretical Framework to orient how the Center should

    operate.

    v. Recommendations for Programming, Events, and Signature Initiatives of the Center.

    vi. Recommendation of an center name that represents the highlighted mission/purpose of the space.

Project Milestones *Project significant accomplishments anticipated over the life of the project with estimated timeline*

1.   Develop introduction, background, and project purpose (21 Jul 2021)

2.   Develop SMART goals and objectives, and a list of deliverables/outcomes (06 Aug 2021)

3.   Develop scope of the project (16 Aug 2021)

4.   Complete literature review of African American/Cultural Centers, theoretical frames, and best practices

       (31 Aug 2021)

5.   Begin Execution of Plan – Using the Appreciative Inquiry Process (1 Sept 2021)

6.   Completion of Appreciative Inquiry Process (20 March 2022)

7.   Develop draft recommendations for Strategic Plan (2 April 2022)

8.   Finalize overall performance and reflections (20 April 2022)

9.   Complete Executive Summary (20 June 2022)

10.   Present and release results to the African American Cultural Center, Campus Community Center/OIED (30 August 2022)

Project SMART Objectives *Include 3 to 5*

1. Assess Current African American Cultural Center (AACC) using Appreciative Inquiry.
2. Create a survey or interview questions to gauge what students, staff, and other community stakeholders look for in a thriving and a successful African American Cultural Center.
3. Create proposed recommendations for new initiatives regarding AACC operations and events based on feedback from students, staff, and community partners
4. Development of a Mission, Vision, and Values Statement for the center aligned with a selected theoretical frame for the office to operate.

Major Known Risks (including significant Assumptions) *Identify obstacles that may cause the project to fail.*

Risk	Risk Rating (Hi, Med, Lo)
Ongoing physical/social distancing and COVID-19 limitations- The pandemic has changed the way the universities operate, limiting student contact and in-person opportunities. The ever-changing nature of the pandemic challenges the ability of the project host/site and participants to be accessible.	Medium Risk
Fear about purpose and agenda for Center - There could be a perceived fear about the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion at a Large Public Institution as disruptive and agitating. This negative perception could stifle the advocacy work and make the purpose of the plan cloudy.	Medium Risk

Openness and communication with community partners – Diversity and Inclusion topics can be viewed as	Medium Risk

uncomfortable conversations and sometimes polarizing. A risk could exist where community members are reluctant to share their true feelings and experiences due to fear of discussing these topics.	

Constraints *List any conditions that may limit the project team's options with respect to resources, personnel, or schedule (e.g., predetermined budget or project end date, limit on number of staff that may be assigned to the project).*

The African American Cultural Center is situated within the Campus Community Centers in The Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity that is structurally under the purview of the executive VP and Provost. Many individuals make up interested parties for this project. There may be other offices or branches within the University that may be doing similar work. Additionally, all of the individuals involved have additional responsibilities and roles on campus that may limit their ability to pay a significant amount of attention to completing this project.

External Dependencies *Will project success depend on coordination of efforts between the project team and one or more other individuals or groups? Has everyone involved agreed to this interaction?*

This project will depend on the staff, students, faculty, and community members who interact with the African American Cultural Center and are a part of this community. External Dependencies could be student groups, clubs, or organizations that interact with the AACC.

5. Communication Strategy *(specify how the project manager will communicate to the Host, Sponsor, Project Team members, and Stakeholders, e.g., frequency of status reports, frequency of Project Team meetings, etc.*

A consistent and frequent communication plan is key to the success of this project, therefore the project manager plans to meet with the following intentions:

- On a bi-weekly basis, the Project Manager would share updates and milestones achieved with the Project Host and Site Supervisor,
- Monthly meetings with the AACC Staff to share updates on the status of the project.
- Quarterly the project team would meet to discuss upcoming goals and next steps with the project.
- Once per semester, the Project Manager would meet with the project faculty advisor to give updates on the project's progress.

6. Sign-off

	Name	Signature	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Project Host(s)	angela gay-audre, M.A		
Project Sponsor	Elizabeth Jones, Ed.D.		
Project Manager	Jameco McKenzie, M.Ed.		

7. Notes - The project manager is an employee of the institution where this project is taking place.

Appendix C

CITI Certifications

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details.
See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

• **Name:**	Lorenzo Jameco McKenzie (ID: 9668550)
• **Institution Affiliation:**	Gardner-Webb University (ID: 2267)
• **Institution Email:**	lmckenzie@gardner-webb.edu
• **Institution Unit:**	School of Education - DEOL
• **Curriculum Group:**	Graduate School of Education Research Investigators
• **Course Learner Group:**	Same as Curriculum Group
• **Stage:**	Stage 1 - Basic Course
• **Record ID:**	39733569
• **Completion Date:**	08-Jul-2021
• **Expiration Date:**	07-Jul-2024
• **Minimum Passing:**	85
• **Reported Score*:**	91

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127)	21-Nov-2020	3/3 (100%)
Students in Research (ID: 1321)	18-Apr-2021	4/5 (80%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	21-Nov-2020	4/5 (80%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	21-Nov-2020	5/5 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	21-Nov-2020	4/5 (80%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	14-Mar-2021	4/5 (80%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	14-Mar-2021	4/5 (80%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	14-Mar-2021	5/5 (100%)
Research with Prisoners - SBE (ID: 506)	18-Apr-2021	4/5 (80%)
Research with Children - SBE (ID: 507)	18-Apr-2021	4/5 (80%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE (ID: 508)	18-Apr-2021	5/5 (100%)
International Research - SBE (ID: 509)	18-Apr-2021	5/5 (100%)
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID: 510)	18-Apr-2021	5/5 (100%)
Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections (ID: 14)	08-Jul-2021	5/5 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees (ID: 483)	08-Jul-2021	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Human Subjects Research (ID: 17464)	08-Jul-2021	5/5 (100%)
Gardner-Webb University (ID: 14691)	08-Jul-2021	No Quiz

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k4e6a24ea-27d4-438e-935e-1a476e1ac6ae-39733569

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
Email: support@citiprogram.org
Phone: 888-529-5929
Web: https://www.citiprogram.org

Completion Date	08-Jul-2021
Expiration Date	07-Jul-2024
Record ID	39733569

This is to certify that:

Lorenzo Jameco McKenzie

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Graduate School of Education Research Investigators
(Curriculum Group)
Graduate School of Education Research Investigators
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Gardner-Webb University

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wae893fc5-7c4f-4353-a9f3-e50842752c5c-39733569

Appendix D

Student Feedback Sessions Prompts

Questions for the Feedback Sessions:

- When you think about the AACC, what do you think of?
- What are some of the past experiences that you have had with AACC that has brought you to come out today?
- What was an outstanding program or opportunity you participated in with the AACC during your time here at NC State?
- What is something that you think we should carry forward to the next chapter of the AACC? What should not carry forward?
- What should the AACC consider doing or incorporating to enhance its reach with the NCSU Community? (What do students want to see happen in the AACC?
- What do you think is missing from our missing (what's missing; what do you want to see happen here; should this happen)?
- Student Activities that we should encourage to be held here:

Appendix E

AACC Staff and OIED Leadership Interview Questions

Interview with AACC Staff

1. Talk about what is the AACC to you?

2. How does your role factor into what the AACC does?

3. What are we doing well?

4. What do we need to do better at?

5. What is your vision for the future (position and AACC as a organization)?

6. What is guiding your work?

7. What do you think should guide the work of the AACC?

8. How do you think the cultural center fits within the larger institution - NC State. How should it fit within the community we are situated in?

9. What traditions of the cultural center are still relevant for today and how can they be reimagined for contemporary society?

10. Considering the scope and purpose of the AACC, where do you believe white folks fit into or not fit into the work of the cultural center?

Appendix F

Deliverable (Community Engagement Project Report)

AACC Community Engagement Project

*Advancing the African American Cultural Center through
the Principle of Sankofa.*

July 25, 2022

*Consultancy Project Report Prepared By
L. Jameco McKenzie, M.Ed.*

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Technical Terms & Definitions

AACC	This acronym is used interchangeably with The African American Cultural Center
OIED	This acronym is used interchangeably with Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity
Blackness	The expansive ways in which people of the global African diaspora show up and express themselves through culture, actions, beliefs, and traditions
Equity	The action of creating just opportunities, policies, and structures that create an outcome where people can thrive
Scholarship	The body of work that adds to the intellectual and social development of a people in a specific environment
Diversity	A variety of difference
Community	A feeling of connectedness between people in a particular space that aids in their ability to show up and feel empowered to be successful in a given environment.
Inclusion	An act of developing policies and practices that would take into account the perspectives and ideas of otherwise marginalized folx
Hidden Curriculum	Unwritten ways of being that helps students navigate campus being able to unlock access to unwritten rules of campus life and academics

Introduction

The African American Cultural Center (AACC) at NC State is at a crossroads in its history at the university and is celebrating its 30th Anniversary. The AACC operates as a hub for Blackness at NC State. It provides academic, social, cultural, and personal enrichment and support services for the university community, particularly Black folks. The African American Cultural Center is one of four campus community centers under the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity umbrella.

The African American Cultural Center (AACC), much like other offices/units within higher education, has been affected by staff turnover. Due to the staffing vacancies, the Center recently underwent a new hiring process that resulted in all new staff members joining the team. All but one staff member in the center is new to the institution, with 5 of 6 folks having less than two years of experience at NC State.

As the AACC moves forward and envisions the next 30 years of its existence, this project seeks to help provide insights into what the community thinks about the Cultural Center and identify needs as it relates to office structure, offers, the physical environment, and programming and role within situated within the large OIED and NC State.

This report summarizes faculty, staff, student focus groups, individual interviews, and survey results for over 80 community members engaged with the AACC. In addition, it provides a roadmap on recommendations for the future of The African American Cultural Center at NC State.

The Context of the AACC

The African American Cultural Center is situated within the larger NC State University, a research-intensive university founded in 1887 primarily as an institution of agriculture and the mechanical arts. The institution has grown in its 135 years of existence to a preeminently ranked university in science, technology, engineering, and math. NC State, a predominantly white institution (PWI), began admitting Black students in the 1950s (1953 - graduate students and 1956 - undergraduates).

The African American Cultural Center was founded in the 1970s as a response to the advocacy and activism of Black NC State students and supporters from the surrounding Raleigh area universities. Safety, belonging, and curation of a welcoming environment at a large historically white institution were and still are essential tenets of why the AACC exists.

Over time, the physical space of the now AACC expanded from a one-room gathering space to a three levels structure within Witherspoon Student Center. The AACC contains a multipurpose room on the first floor, a gallery, and a library on the second floor, and the third floor operates as the living room and main office with lounge furniture, staff offices, study, and meeting spaces.

As a part of the larger campus community centers: the African American Cultural Center, together with the GLBT Center, Multicultural Student Affairs, and the Women's Center, educates, holds space for community and resources, and is responsive to equity and inclusion of the needs of the NC State community.

Sankofa: *"it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind."*

The Story of Sankofa teaches us to look back to move forward. Concerning this consultancy project, it means that by gathering information from the past, experiences, joys, challenges, and insights, we would be able to reflect, synthesize the information and chart a course of action for the prosperity and future of the African American Cultural Center.

Guiding Research Questions

The following three overarching questions guided this project:

1. What strategies, practices, traditions, and signature events should the African American Cultural Center carry forward or implement to make the space and services offered more preeminent to meet the needs of the NC State Community?

2. How does the current space, amenities, resources, and structure of the African American Cultural Center effectively address the needs of the NC State Community?

3. How can the African American Cultural Center broaden its reach in the NC State Community?

Through the various subheads, this project report seeks to answer these questions that will advance the African American Cultural Center.

Project Design

This project was designed as a Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR), intentionally including AACC stakeholders in the inquiry, decision making, and project execution. The project was managed by L. Jameco McKenzie and co-constructed and executed by members of OIED and the AACC staff. The project utilized tenants of the Appreciative Inquiry process: Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny coupled with Getzel's Social Systems Theory. The appreciative inquiry process was used to form focus groups and interview questions to engage stakeholders throughout the 5 stage process.

Getzel's Social Systems Theory suggests that organizations act as a social system, and the organization's interrelated dimensions affect the observable outcome of its employees. This theoretical perspective was implemented in forming prompts that the AACC & OIED staff were asked in their interviews.

Through an iterative process, the project manager first observed the AACC, reviewed documents, and then worked with the project team to design data collection strategies to document the community's perspectives on the state of the AACC and glean ideas about what the future of the center should look like.
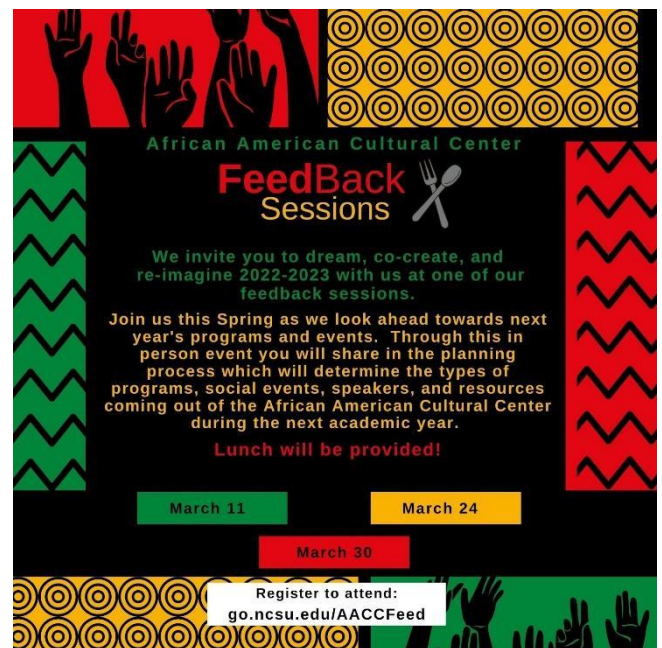
Methodology

The project included the following data collection methods:

1. Individual interviews with staff of AACC and Senior leadership in OIED
2. Three Focus Groups named FeedBack Sessions:
    1. Two for students and student organizations
    2. One for faculty and staff
2. A community-wide survey went out to over 200 campus stakeholders with relations and connections to the African American Cultural Center
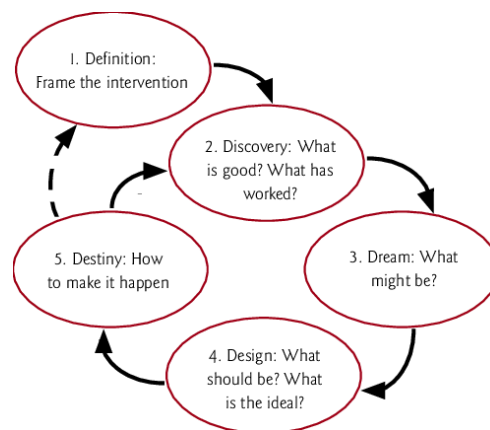
Included in the appendix are questionnaires asked of the participants. This document will discuss and summarize responses, key themes, and observations.

Interview with AACC & OIED Staff

Through semi-structured open-ended questions, staff of the African American Cultural Center and OIED Campus Community Center Leadership were asked a series of questions. Below each subheading is the themes and key points observed in their responses.

How The Staff Perceives of AACC Role

The staff believes that AACC is a place for:

- Resources —- to be a connecting place; a hub of resources and direction
- Black faculty, staff + students —- to belong, have a space to exist, and just be unapologetically Black
- Education & Learning — get your questions answered, learn about Blackness, study, and be enriched
- Reprieve, Celebration & Affirmation — through the care of the community, a break from the larger campus community, create joy, feel seen in the university
- Community & connection — be around others, build relationships
- Opportunities —for both Black and non-Black folks alike

Overwhelmingly staff members within the AACC see their roles as integral to the Black student experience and see themselves as facilitators of learning through programming, advising, and helping students and student organizations. In addition, the staff sees themselves as good stewards of the physical space — creating opportunities for students to meet, engage with each other and attend engaging programs.

An area of growth highlighted through the interview with staff is the need to develop a consistent and robust assessment process and data collection methods to:

- Build the base of constituents who utilizes the space
- Understand the needs of the community
- Record the history of the center and document the success and growth areas
- Know what works well and what needs to be tweaked for further success

Additionally, AACC staff listed the idea of over programming to be a concern — as it challenges the team's ability to be present with the community members and provides student development and organic support due to constantly feeling like there is something that has to be done related to programming and the accompanying administration. Also, the staff highlighted the need to call others into the work of supporting and engaging with the Black community. The theme of being a hub emerged frequently. As the hub of Blackness at NC State, the staff identified the need to have some role clarification and parity across other campus community centers related to what resources can be allocated to the AACC for its success.

AACC Staff's Vision

In synthesizing the staff members' thoughts around the concept of vision, the following themes emerged:
- The need for more structure – clear guidelines on roles and responsibilities within the organization
- Enhanced Engagement – for both students and staff/faculty attending more culturally relevant signature events and experiential learning opportunities (study abroad, performance groups, critical conversations)
- Honoring the Black experience – through engaging in joy + resistance, learning about history, and holding space to exist without the need to be actively doing something

The staff believes that the work of the AACC should be guided by theory, specifically, theorists who center on care for and love of people. Additionally, they believe that the needs of students, community, equity, Black affirmation, and representation should guide the center's work.

AACC's Fit Within The Larger Institution

The staff feels they are collaborative, especially with other campus community centers, and the theme of feeling undervalued and underused emerged. The team suggested that more engagement should be in positioning the center in the forefront beyond being responsive to racial unrest. They suggest that the center be more prominent in the campus community, serve a more expanded role in educating the larger campus community, and be a place for Black NC State to belong.

AACC Traditions & Cultural Practices

Some staff members highlighted that the traditions are unknown due to not being documented and passed on to new community members. The interviews highlighted a need for further interrogation into what traditions should be for the future. Conversely, the team reported that the following cultural practices are important:

- Tapping of the drum to announce the entrance and exist of the AACC

- Polyrhythmic Clap
- Acknowledging people as they enter the space
- The call and response of "Ago/Ame"
- Initiations ceremony for AYA Ambassadors

Signature events such as Kwanza, Black History Month, Blacks in Wax, Harambee, Ebony Harlem, and also the bi-weekly conversation "What's on the table" emerged as important parts of the AACC identity that should continue as they create student and community connection and a sense of home within the AACC.

Questions that emerged from the AACC traditions conversation are:
- How do we initiate people into the center?
- How should student leaders facilitate interactions and conversations with others - what values should we center?
- How might we develop a tradition of student organizations being more connected to the center?
- What is the process of training, sustaining, and graduating our student leaders?

Engagement from/with Majority Culture

The AACC staff highlighted that while the cultural center directly supports and highlights Black folks' needs, the center is a space for all people within the NC State and the larger Raleigh community. Non-Black allies and collaborators in the space are seen by the AACC staff as folks who can and should be guests, advocates and seek out learning opportunities.

Feedback Sessions

The AACC hosted three feedback sessions as focus groups on the center and its programmatic offerings. Two sessions for students (undergraduate and graduate) and one session for faculty and staff. This report section will share major themes and findings from those focus groups.

Student Feedback Sessions

The student feedback sessions were set up in two parts. The first was an opportunity for students to engage with the programs and events planned for the upcoming academic year and offer feedback on the experiences offered and the second part was a debrief conversation about their experiences and engagement with the AACC.

In the first part of the feedback sessions, students shared major themes of appreciation for and support of all the planned events. Ideas surfaced, such as enhanced collaboration with Black student organizations for events and opportunities for Black student organizations to develop leadership skills and help with the transition. Other popular ideas were creating a service trip and connecting with Black alumni. Students also shared it could be beneficial to branch outside of NC State and worth Raleigh area organizations and HBCUs.

Part two of the Feedback sessions was a debrief. Below is key information shared regarding the Black student experience with AACC.

The following themes emerged when asked what comes to mind when they think about the AACC:

- **Home** - Many focus group participants shared the African American Cultural Center made them feel at home. They share a feeling of warmth and safety within the space.

- **A reprieve** - students share that coming to the AACC space allows them to take their masks off (figuratively) compared to other spaces. They can be their authentic selves and feel welcomed, which is a solid foundation to return to.

- **Learning** - students shared that the center is a space for them to study; they use the study rooms, and because of the design of the space, they are not overwhelmed by too many people overcrowding the space compared to Talley Student Union or the University Libraries.

Past Experience With the Center

When asked about past experiences with the center, students shared they've been in the center for academic courses that aided in their reflection on self and identity; other students discussed that they had been engaged with AACC for signature programs such as Harambee, *What's on the Table* and other student-led events having been enjoyable connections with the space. Students also

shared that they looked forward to late-night breakfast and that the art gallery exhibits were important events.

One concern that emerged is the idea of over-programming. One participant shared that there should be a balance between active and passive events. It allows students to choose their adventure without feeling like there is always something, or somewhere they must be.

Ideas to Enhance the Center

Students shared the importance of The African American Cultural Center as a connecting place for resources, namely:
- **Financial Resources** - highlighted the need for contacts and workshops that connect students to financial resources and teach students how to navigate financial needs in college environments
- **Personal/Social/Academic Development** - workshop and resources that speak to the whole student experience and help students navigate effectively
- **Advocacy** - being able to come to the space to get what they need to learn how to advocate for themselves in
- **Possible Technology Station** - students shared that they would appreciate laptops or desktops available in the center's main lounge area

Additionally, students shared there is a need to reexamine our marketing and outreach plan. Many participants shared they only learned about the AACC through email and suggested an expanded effort to reach students outside of sending an email. Additionally, they suggested updating the social media pages to be more NCSU specific as the current *@aaculturalcenter* might be hard to find and associate with NC State. About a third of the participants share that they have engaged with the newsletter and found it beneficial – including any relevant information and resources. Aside from the newsletter, the students shared that there is not a lot of advertising on the center in the larger campus community.

Feedback Session for Faculty and Staff

In Spring 2022, faculty and staff were invited to a breakfast at the African American Cultural Center to share their experiences and insights with the AACC. The session was two-fold; in part one, folks engaged with 4 tabletop questions, followed by a large group discussion in part two. Below are major takeaways from that experience.

Need for Belonging – Staff and faculty shared they believed the AACC was a place exclusively for students and did not see themselves or recognize they could be an intended audience for the offerings of the space. The Faculty and staff shared they have attended signature programs in the past, such as Harambee and Art Galleries, and previously engaged with the faculty fellows program. The faculty and staff members shared an interest in engaging with the center in the future and suggested hosting their departmental or organization's events within the space.

Developing Community – The staff and faculty highlighted a need for community among specifically Black peers. They shared feelings of isolation and the wanting for community care to develop a system of support and encouragement. Some suggestions for this community development were after-work socials, informal lunches, and more formal center-driven programming and engagement such as talks, or discussions focused on Black faculty and staff.

Elevate Scholarship – Black faculty shared the center's importance in helping share Black stories and experiences in academia, adding to the body of work produced by Black practitioners, academics, and scholars at NC State. Folks discussed the possibility of forming grant opportunities funded by AACC for graduate students and faculty members to research Black experiences and share their findings within the AACC.

Expand Blackness – Staff and faculty shared how they believed the AACC could be the center of expanding Blackness within the NC State community. By prioritizing back ideas, assets, cultural knowledge, and wisdom, the AACC can teach community members the *hidden circular* on navigating the complexities of the college environment effectively.

Marketing the space – Participants at the Feedback session shared perspectives on expanding the AACC's marketing and outreach efforts towards faculty and staff. Some of the more popular suggested ideas include developing a faculty and staff network (mailing list), hosting more events in the daytime to accommodate folks with families, and continuing to produce the AACC

newsletter. Additionally, there was some conversation about a way to get new Black employees connected or introduced to the AACC in their orientation to campus or onboarding experience.

A note from this feedback session is that folks shared there is no presence of the campus community centers and the AACC, specifically on the Centennial campus of the university. An idea was floated to possibly have pop-up events or meet-ups outside the physical Witherspoon space in locations on the Centennial campus to provide space for folks working on that side of campus to feel included.

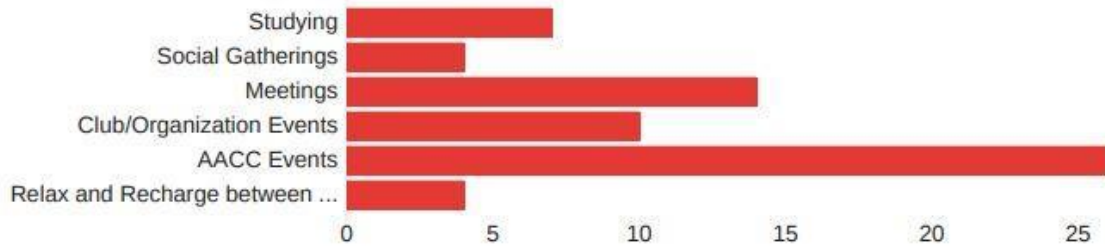**AACC Community Engagement Survey**
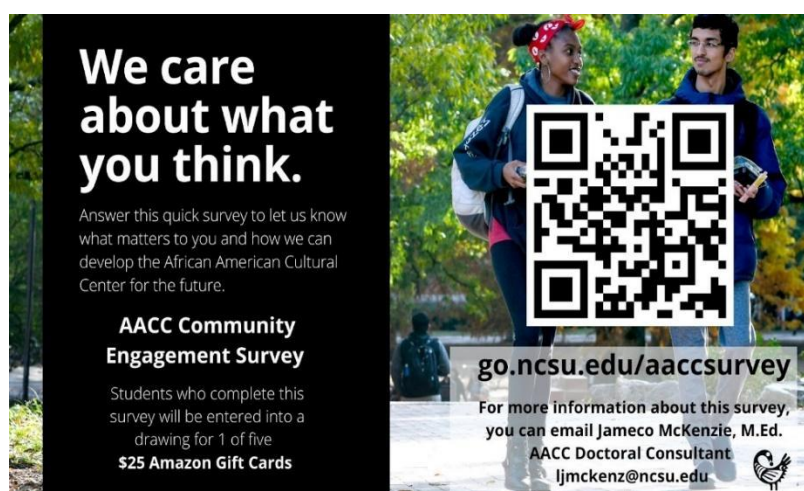
The third means of data collection was a launch of a community engagement survey. The survey was shared with 260 participants identified as partners and contacts of the AACC. There were 75 respondents in the survey, including NC State community members. Below are the major findings and key takeaways from the survey.
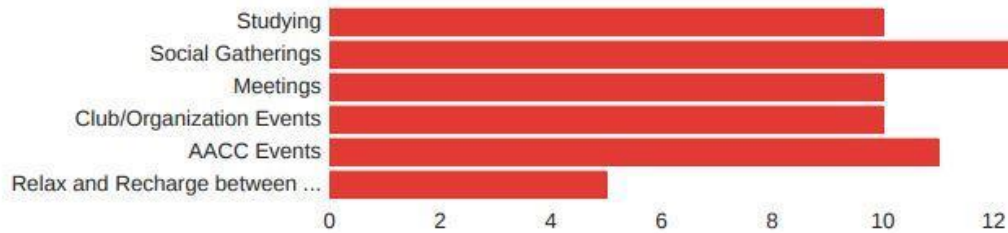
By the numbers….
- Most respondents were women (56%) and identified as heterosexual (65%)
- 67% of respondents identified as African American, Black, African, or Afro- Caribbean
- 43% of respondents were NC State Students
- 46% of respondents were NC State Staff
- 11% of respondents were NC State Faculty
- Of the student respondents, the top three colleges were Education, Humanities & Social Sciences, and College of Sciences
- The majority of student respondents were juniors, followed by first-year students
- Most respondents were aware that the AACC has a library (85%) however, 33% of respondents did not know that programs or meetings could be held in the library
- 33% of the respondents were not aware that they could have study sessions, 1:1 meetings, and independent workspaces in the AACC

Usage of the Space

Q12 - What is the primary reason that you use the AACC space for? (Select One)

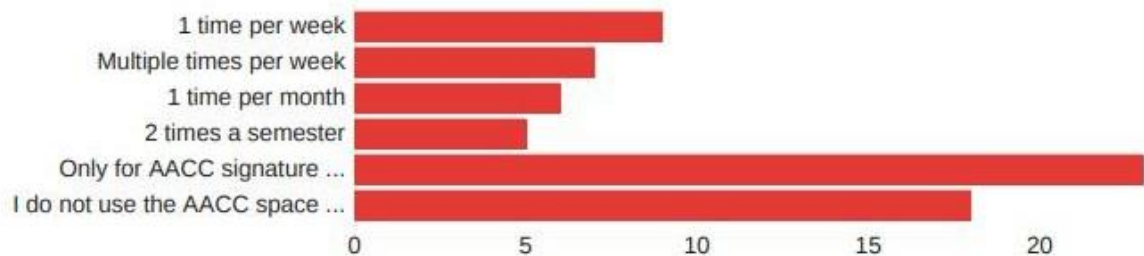Q13 - What is the secondary reason that you use the AACC space for? (Select One)

The primary and secondary reasons people use the AACC, according to the survey results, are to:
- Attend AACC Events
- Social Gathers

Considering the secondary reasons people use the AACC – studying, meetings, and club/organizational events tied for runner-up in this category, indicating that the space has a variety of uses for the NC State Community.

Q14 - How often do you use the AACC? (Select One)

Community members shared that they use the space most often primarily for signature programs and events (34%), while nearly 27% of respondents to the survey shared that they do not currently use the AACC.

When asked to rank what the participants thought was the most important role of the AACC, they listed the following:
1. To provide an enclave for Black folx at NC State
2. To be a space for community building
3. To teach, learn about, and appreciate back culture in its diverse forms
4. To be an academic resource
5. To be a meeting space

Enhancing the Reach of AACC
Survey respondents were asked what the AACC should consider doing or incorporating to enhance its reach with the NCSU Community. The respondents were given a list of options; their top responses to this question can be found in the tiers below:

Tire 1 - Connections with Faculty and staff or other NC State resources

Tier 2 - Fund laid back events/social gatherings,
        Workshops, and Training
        Leadership Development Opportunities

Tier 3 - Race and gender intersectional events

        Encourage class sessions to be held in AACC
        Partner with Raleigh area organizations to host events
        Community Service and Volunteering Opportunities
        Pop Culture Events

In addition to the list above, respondents were asked to add any other ideas they believed would enhance the reach of the AACC. Of note, a respondent shared that applied research projects could be something to incorporate to dismantle and disrupt systematic racism. As it brings more alignment of the center into the academic mission of NC State. Additionally, folks share the benefits of an open house series sponsored throughout the year to help community members get to know each other and become familiar with the center.

Hours of Operations

Respondents to the survey suggest that regularly scheduled events on the weekend and weekdays during late nights could help reach an underserved audience within the NC State Community.

Sense of Belonging, Inclusion

Respondents in the survey shared that they feel welcomed into the African American Cultural Center. A theme of home resonated with the respondents. Additionally, there was a high regard for the center being a place of belonging for the respondents, particularly around being affirming. Also, the center's work around the community, support, education, and knowledge helps the respondents feel like they belong.

From a faculty perspective, there was a note in this survey section about more applied research opportunities or developing a faculty liaison role to help bring the faculty academic voice to the AACC.

Openness to change

Respondents to the survey were asked if, in honoring tradition, Do you believe things should always be done the way they have always been done?

Most respondents shared openness to change, with one respondent expanding on their response with "Not all students…. Attend the university will require the same needs and interests," indicating the importance of being student-centered in the way the center operates and makes decisions to better serve the community members.

Overarching Findings & Action Plan Recommendations

Engaging in this consultancy with the AACC has been an insightful experience. The interviews, focus groups, and survey results indicate the African American Cultural Center has a strong presence at the University. The Black community is directly supported by the AACC, and it is an integral part of campus life and their sense of community and belonging at NC State.

AACC Needs

In Synthesizing all the information, the following are the recommendations to advance the African American Cultural Center.

- **Creation of Faculty/Staff Mentoring Program for Students** - Survey and focus group data from students, and faculty/staff indicate a yearning for students to engage more with Faculty and Staff. This type of engagement would be beneficial as it helps students learn about and Identify student leaders and elevate their skills and disciplinary acumen by being engaged with faculty and staff in their areas of study. This recommendation will also increase faculty and staff engagement within the space. Additionally, this relationship could be beneficial to teaching Black students the *Hidden curriculum* - that is, how they navigate an institution that was not built with them in mind.

- **Creation of Marketing & Outreach Plan for AACC** - The data suggests more work needs to be done regarding the marketing of the center and its offerings to reach more NC State. More targeted outreach strategies could be beneficial to helping the center yield more engagement and get the word out about the impactful work it already does.

- **Development of a comprehensive Academic Engagement Strategy -** Survey results listed academic engagements in the AACC's top three most important roles. The Center should create a comprehensive academic engagement plan that includes the development of educational workshops (for on-campus and greater Raleigh community), courses held in the AACC, and center-sponsored experiential learning opportunities that bring learning outside of the traditional classroom such as culturally relevant trips and immersion experiences. This strategy would further embolden the connection between the AACC and the academic mission of NC State and prepare and inform folx to be culturally responsive learners and academics.

- **Creation of a data tracking system to analyze the work of the center**- The focus groups, particularly with the staff of the center, emerged a theme that suggests there needs to be

more analytics to understand who's needs are been served with the current format and offerings of the center and also what communities might the center focus in on to address gaps that exist. By developing a data tracking system, student and community engagement could measure the efficacy of programming and resources, leading to more targeted engagement opportunities and outreach efforts to provide additional support to more of the NC State community, specifically to underserved Black NC State populations at the margins.

- **Create more formalized partnerships and memorandums with Depts, Offices, and Units in the Raleigh area** - The concept of the AACC being a hub for Blackness emerged as a consistent theme in this study. As a hub for Blackness, the center should look into developing formalized relationships with other offices, departments, and units both at NC State and beyond that would potentially affect the experience of Black students and community members at NC State. By creating these memorandums, the work of supporting Black students will not be siloed into just what is done in OIED through the AACC. Still, it would be organized as an important component and responsibility of the university and its many offices and units.

- **Implementation of a Mission Vision Values** - The study suggests there should be a deeper look into the Center's mission, vision, and values and should be moving forward. Many different voices and options have emerged regarding what the center should do. A common thread was the idea of being a Hub for Blackness at NC State and that the center's work is expansive, including more than just students but the larger NC State community and the Raleigh community in which the university is situated. The current mission, vision, and values do not highlight this unique distinction, and work should be done to bring the guiding documents and philosophy of the center into alignment with the ethos and needs of the community.

- **Explore creating a Development Role** - Through the focus groups of the students and engagement with the center staff, the need to have more financial resources cultivated specifically for the success of Black students at NC State emerged. Through the development of a development role within OIED and AACC, there could be a focused engagement on getting benefactors to give to the AACC and organizing ongoing

fundraising activities that would help retain and support Black students successfully navigating the NC State Community.

- **Create a Black Leadership Certificate Program** - The creation of leadership development opportunities emerged as a Tier two idea that garnered significant support as an activity the center should consider doing to expand its reach within the NC State Community. Additionally, the focus groups with students identified the need for Black student organizations to have more intentional engagement with AACC staff to help them develop skills to run their organizations effectively. Through creating a Black Leadership Certificate program, students and potential student organizational leaders can develop strong transferable leadership skills that would improve the student organizations' success and the student efficiency in project management that could be used beyond the college environment.
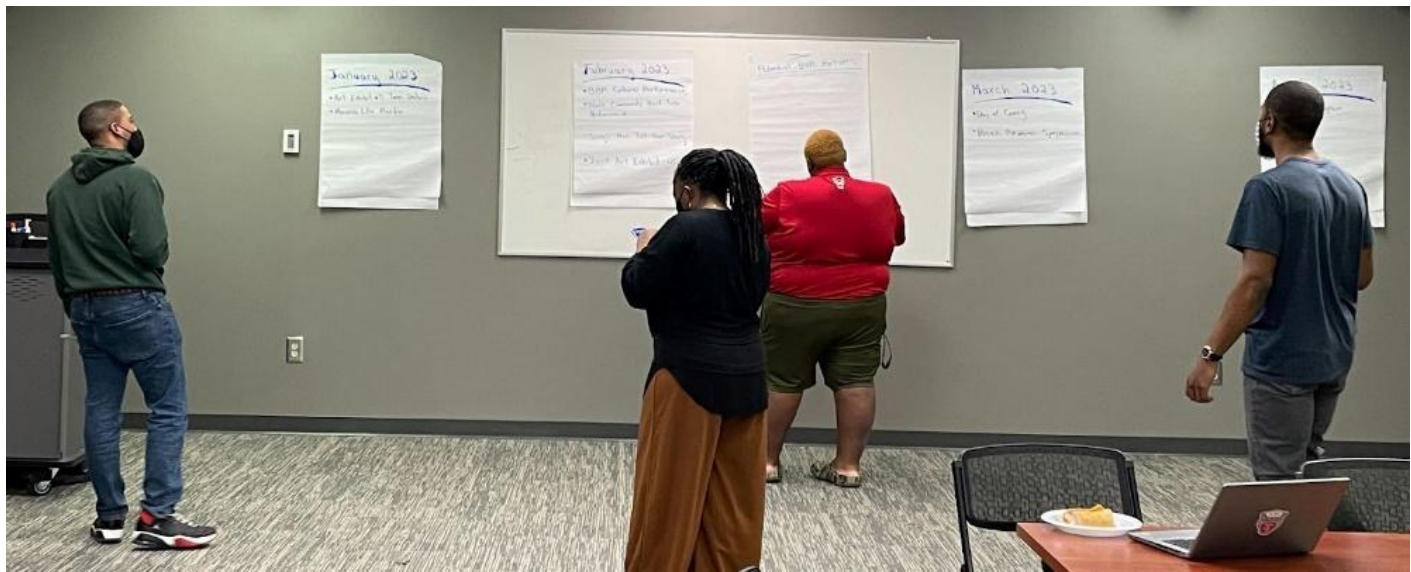
- **Consider examining and proposing a new name for the Center** - Through the research, there appears to be an idea folk within the community feel as though they were unaware of the center being a space for them to belong to or engage with. The name African American Cultural Center is limiting and does not fully tell the story of the intersectional and many ways Blackness shows up and is supported within the center. The current name serves as a barrier to Black students and faculty/staff engagement who may not identify with African Americans or feel that this marker does not represent them, particularly Afro-Latinx, Caribbean, African or other members of the Black diaspora from around the world. There is a disconnect between the expansive Blackness lifted up and supported in the space and the perceptions associated with the center's name.

Action Plan Recommendation	Importance & Impact	Stakeholders involved with recommendation	Time frame to complete
Consider examining and proposing a new name for the Center	This action plan recommendation would help broaden the reach of the culture center, reduce barriers of entry and highlight the expansive and inclusive work around Blackness that the center embodies and empowers.	AACC Director Senior Director, Campus Community Centers Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity	12 Months
Creation of Faculty/Staff Mentoring Program for Students	This action plan recommendation would catalyze more students and faculty/staff interaction. Through the interaction, students would foster important relationships with disciplinary professionals in their majors, increase faculty staff engagement in the center and teach students the *hidden curriculum* of NC State.	AACC Assistant Director Inclusive Excellence and Strategic Practice Faculty & Staff College Diversity Directors	3- 6 Months
Creation of Marketing & Outreach Plan for AACC	This action plan recommendation would inform the NC State community about the impactful resources, support, and services that the center offers and help more people know about the space as a hub for Blackness.	All AACC Staff OIED Marketing Senior Director, Campus Community Centers	6 Months
Create more formalized partnerships and memorandums with Depts, Offices, and Units in the Raleigh Area	This action plan recommendation actualizes the concept that the AACC is a hub for Blackness. It brings together the expertise and collegiality from across the university and reduces siloes, positioning the center in a more front-facing position.	College Diversity Directors AACC Staff Division of Academic and Student Affairs Units	6 - 9 Months
Development of a comprehensive	This action plan recommendation helps embolden the center and connect it to the academic	AACC Staff	12- 24 Months

Action Plan Recommendation	Importance & Impact	Stakeholders involved with recommendation	Time frame to complete
Academic Engagement Strategy	mission of NC State. Survey results listed academic engagement as an important role for the center. This recommendation will prepare community members to become culturally responsive leaders and academics.	Africana Studies & Interdisciplinary Studies Depts Inclusive Excellence and Strategic Practice College Diversity Directors	
Creation of a data tracking system to analyze the work of the center	This action plan recommendation would develop a strategic way to gauge how the current services and offerings are impacting the community and highlight gaps that might exist to use data impact what kinds of further support or targeted outreach might be needed to positively impact the Black community at NC State.	AACC Director Assessment Office AACC Administrative Support Specialist	3- 6 Months
Implementation of new Mission Vision Values	This action plan recommendation would more accurately bring together the current and future practices of the center to tell the story of how the space is a Hub for Blackness; in education, community building and resources.	AACC Director	12 months
Explore creating a Development Role	This action plan recommendation would lift up and provide support to the operations of the center by being able to garner major gifts from benefactors to improve the student experience, provide capital to help in unforeseen emergencies, decrease socioeconomic barriers for engagement with high impact practices and lessen the burden	AACC Director Senior Director, Campus Community Centers Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity	12- 24 months

Action Plan Recommendation	Importance & Impact	Stakeholders involved with recommendation	Time frame to complete
	on students having to think about the financial aspects of being a student at NC State		
Create a Black Leadership Certificate Program	This action Plan Recommendation would address a need identified by students by developing a formalized way of teaching them transferable skills in leading student leadership and project management	AACC Director AACC Assistant Director Student Leadership & Engagement	12 Months

Acknowledgments

Engaging in this consultancy with the African American Cultural Center has been a collaboration and labor of various folks both within and outside of OIED. We extend gratitude and acknowledgments to the following individuals.

OIED Leadership

- Sheri Schwab, J.D., M.Ed., Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity
- Dr. Stephanie Helms Pickett, Associate Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence and Strategic Practice
- Lisa LaBarbera-Mascote, Senior Director - Campus Community Centers

The Consultancy Project Team

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- Isaiah Lucas, Program Coordinator - African American Cultural Center
- Hanna Amme, Library Coordinator - African American Cultural Center
- Staci Roseboro, Administrative Support Specialist - African American Cultural Center
- Kristen Russell, Graduate Assistant - African American Cultural Center

Additionally, we would like to thank all the NC State students, faculty, staff and community members who have engaged with this project. Your ideas, perspectives, and input have been very important and integral to the success of this project.

Appendix G

Professional Literature Review

The African American Cultural Center (AACC) at NC State University (NC State) is at a crossroads in its history at the university and is celebrating its 30th anniversary. The AACC operates as a hub for Blackness at NC State. It provides academic, social, cultural, and personal enrichment and support services for the university community, particularly Black folks. The AACC is one of four campus community centers under the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity (OIED) umbrella. The AACC, much like other offices/units within higher education, has been affected by staff turnover. Due to the staffing vacancies, the AACC recently underwent a new hiring process that resulted in all new staff members joining the team. All but one staff member in the AACC is new to the institution, with five of six folks having less than 2 years of experience at NC State.

As the AACC moves forward and envisions the next 30 years of its existence, this project seeks to help provide insights into what the community thinks about the AACC and identify needs as it relates to the office structure, offerings, physical environment, and programming role situated within the larger OIED and NC State. My goal in this literature review is to determine best practices for successful Black cultural center (BCC) operations. How do BCC services, practices, and structures benefit student and community success and impact the Black student experience at predominantly White institutions?

Importance of BCCs

As part of my literature review, I reviewed numerous articles, videos, and books about the importance of BCCs and how to run, fund, and sustain successful spaces at universities across the United States. Each of the articles shared different perspectives on what influences the success of a

BCC and what it means to support student development and meaning-making in the college setting. After reviewing each article, three themes immerged:

- relevancy of BCCs
- BCCs impact the development of Black students
- BCCs create counter spaces for students to thrive

These themes are essential elements that help determine best practices for running a successful and impactful AACC at NC State. Based on the NC State Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, enrollment of Black and African American students at the university was 6.4% of the overall campus population (NC State University, n.d.). This low number of Black/African American identified students indicates that this group needs support and is underrepresented in the campus community. The AACC is one of four campus community centers at the university that seek to create belonging and cultivate community for underrepresented groups at NC State (Fulton, 2018).

BCCs were birthed from the struggles of Black students and have existed in one form or another since the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Through advocacy and agitation of students, BCCs emerged as places for predominantly White institutions to create space for Black students on campus (Patton, 2010).

Relevance of BCCs

According to Patton (2006a), it is more than just Black events and socializing. BCCs help students find community and support student success. These spaces serve as a connecting point for Black students and help them navigate a campus environment not created with their inclusion and benefit in mind. Lewis and Shah (2021) suggested that the campus climate at predominantly White institutions necessitates the work of diversity initiatives to develop more equitable campus racial

climates. This perspective is supported by Harris and Patton (2017), who suggested that BCCs collaborate with student affairs units to develop cross-cultural competence and support for Black students. Due to these centering acts as a hub and connection point for Black students, being connected with other offices and units on campus helps garner student support and helps bring resources to enhance the Black student learning experience at predominantly White institutions.

The relevance of BCCs has, over time, come up in literature as a hot-button issue. Some scholars like Fred Hord (2005) shared that BCCs should embrace the idea of becoming more multicultural and de-focusing on the single Black racial identity. In his article, Hefner (2002) shared that as campuses have become more diverse and the non-Black minoritized population increases on college campuses, there has been a push to turn BCCs into multicultural centers. This desire has been met with opposition, and research that shows that identity-conscious spaces help to honor the specific needs and perspectives of different racial and ethnic groups. More specifically, BCCs serve an essential role in helping to inculcate an ethos of Black awareness and pride that does not exist in other spaces. They are primarily seen as positive spaces that are important to Black students on campus life (Hypolite, 2020a). Patton (2006b) suggested that merging BCCs into multicultural centers could "potentially undermine the rich history and purpose of the centers" (p. 642).

BCCs educate students and help them feel like they belong. Patton (2006b) shared that BCCs serve as informational hubs for Black students and student organizations. BCCs also provide physical and figurative space for Black students to meet and be in community with other Black students. They help students adjust to campus life and serve as a resource space for Black education and affinity.

BCCs Impact the Development of Black Students

BCCs often provide space for courses to be taught around Black and Africana studies. These courses are not typically a part of the mainstream circular. Patton (2010) suggested that Black studies courses help students make meaning and find solutions to challenges impacting Black communities. Because of the exposure to BCCs, Black students can learn and explore more of their historical and contemporary understanding of Blackness.

Hypolite (2020b) suggested that BCC staff develop students by becoming "cultural coordinators" (p. 50) between Black organizations. This is accomplished through the intentional curation of resources and relationships. This coordination helps develop the networking skills of Black students and helps them to create alliances between Black student organizations. Patton (2006b) suggested that BCCs help students develop by exposing them to a hidden curriculum; that is, education that is not overtly covered in the mainstream formal educational setting but helps develop a high sense of awareness for Black students to navigate the predominantly White institution college environment successfully. Patton's (2006b) study demonstrated that this development and education are essential for students transitioning into college and supplement the work done by new student orientation teams. Being involved with BCCs helps students develop leadership skills, community, pride in themselves, and a feeling of mattering and self-preservation. Patton (2006b) explored these concepts to mean the following:

- Leadership – By being involved in BCCs, Black students become active contributors to their campus community; learn public speaking, event planning, and teamwork skills; and build student confidence.

- Community – University-wide orientation programs often lack specificity and nuance to talk about Black student experiences and needs in a meaningful way. BCCs help to

foster a sense of community among Black students by having Black-conscious

programming and space that centers on belonging and how to successfully navigate the

campus environment.

- Pride in Black Identity – By being involved with BCCs, Black students gain a

  heightened understanding of their Black identity. It helps these students feel seen and

  have a sense of belonging on campus that otherwise does not center on them.

- Mattering and Self-Preservation – BCCs are a place where students feel respected and

  valued, have a safe place to speak freely about their campus experiences, and feel

  validated and believed.

Hypolite (2020a) shared that BCCs help to guide students individually through the meaning-

making of their racial identity. The spaces are affirming to students who are on their journey of

understanding who they are and what Blackness means to them. Additionally, BCCs help students

understand that Blackness is not monolithic and provides participants with space to show up

authentically in their own experiences with their Black identity (Hypolite, 2020a).

BCCs Create Counter Spaces for Students to Thrive

From inception, BCCs have served as a "home away from home" (Patton, 2010, p. 65) for

Black students at predominantly White institutions. They help students find community and be in a

support mechanism and feel welcomed (Reid & Ebede, 2018). Black students see BCCs as places

that retain them to a university (Hypolite, 2020a). BCCs offer support programs that bolster

student retention by helping them adjust to campus life and provide supplemental classes (Walker,

2007). BCCs are described as where students belong; they help in their social development and

acclimate to college (Hefner, 2002). Successful BCCs embrace the concept of intersectionality.

They consider the multiple dimensions of a student's identity and make space for them to be

themselves and show up as a whole (Harris & Patton, 2017).

Hord (2005) suggested that BCCs that embrace the principles of Kwanzaa help students in the Black community thrive. These principles include

- unity

- self- determination

- collective work and responsibility

- cooperative economics

- purpose

- creativity

- faith

By operating in these principles, BCCs create a counter space for students to thrive and shield them from an outside community that is otherwise hostile to them (Patton, 2010).

Summary

In summary, BCCs play a significant role in the success of Black students in predominantly White institutions. They help students acclimate to an unfamiliar environment through programming and support initiatives. They help students thrive by attending to their social, psychological, and intellectual needs, leading to leadership skill development. Lastly, they create spaces for students to belong at predominantly White institutions, make meaningful connections, and unpack their racial identities.

The work of BCCs is expansive and has continued to adapt to the needs of the students they serve. A consistent thread between all the literature is the care faculty and staff connected with and working at BCCs have for the student population they serve, and the high level of commitment they put into their works is commendable.

Appendix H

Deliverable (Website)
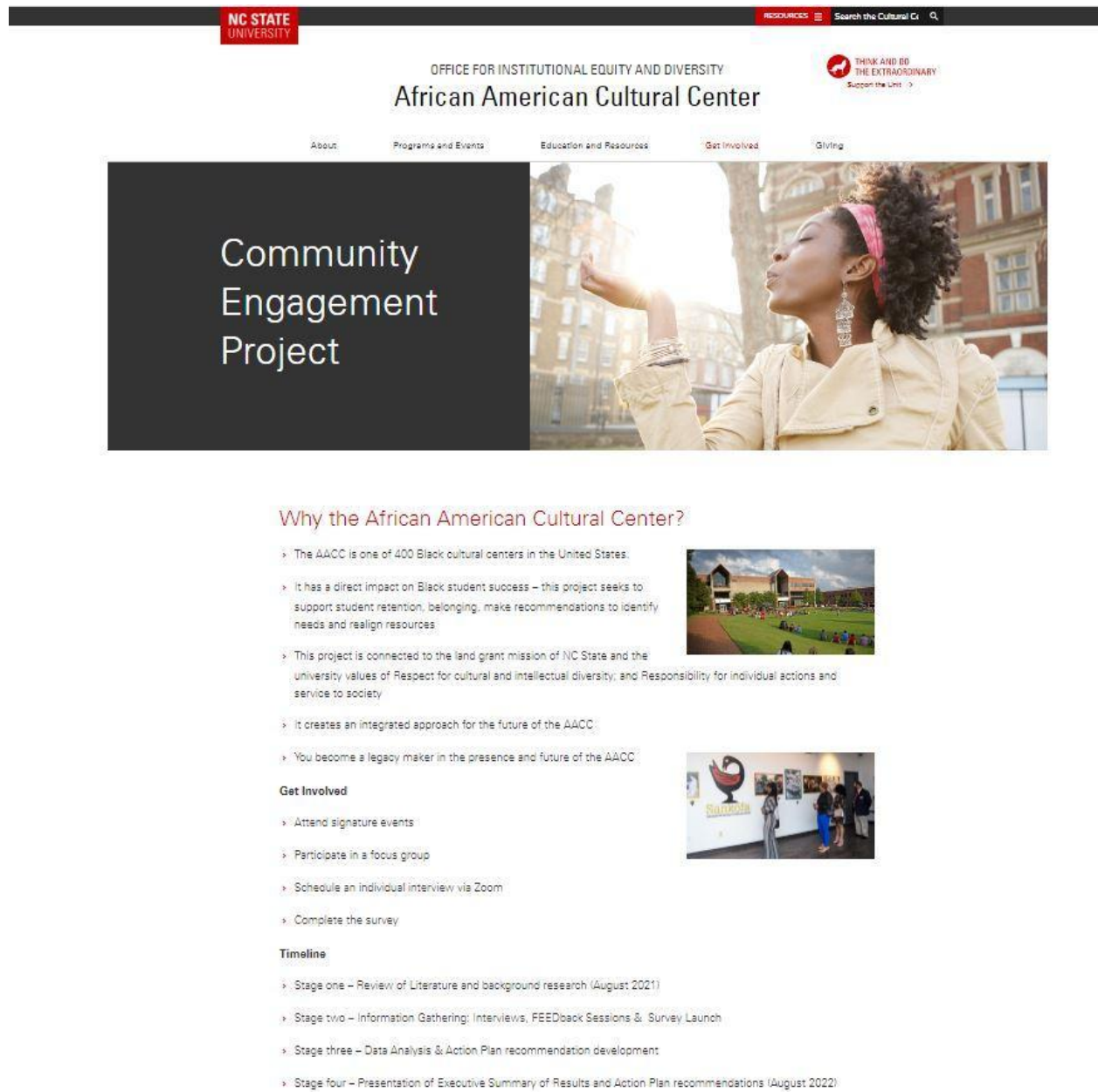
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