

Meeting: Black House Facility Review Task Force with Patricia Telles-Irvin and Dan Linzer

Agenda

Black House Facility Review Committee Report

May 20, 2016

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Review proposed recommendations-Black to the Future, *Charles Whitaker et al.*
- 3) Update on plans for the facility, *Patricia Telles-Irvin*
- 4) Update on the technology upgrades, *Kelly Schaefer*
- 5) Update on The Black Student Experience Task Force, *Lesley Ann Brown Henderson*
- 6) Timetable, *Patricia Telles-Irvin*
- 7) Summary of programs and staff commitments, *Lesley Ann Brown Henderson*
- 8) Next steps, *Patricia Telles-Irvin*

Initiatives

**Black to the Future:
Reaffirming the Purpose, Programming and Continued Viability of
Northwestern University's Black House
2016 - 2020**

Prepared for
Patricia Telles-Irvin,
Vice President for Student Affairs
Morton Schapiro,
President
Daniel Linzer,
Provost

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Prepared by the members of the Black House Review Committee*

Henry Binford, Associate Professor, History
Cariana Chambers, student, SESP, '17
Ce Cole Dillon, alumna, SESP '78
Jazzy Johnson, alumna, SoC '13
Abdul Kelani, student, WCAS '16
Opeyemi Kusoro, alumnus, McCormick '13
Kevin Luong, student, WCAS '16
Kimberley Rudd, alumna, Medill '88
Pleshette Strong, student, Kellogg, '16; WCAS '15
Charles Whitaker, Medill Professor and alumnus, '80, '81
Yjaden Wood, student, WCAS '16

**In volunteer service at the request of the Department of Student Affairs*

The Mission of The Black House:

The Committee of faculty, students and alumni who were assembled to craft a vision for improvements to the university building at 1914 Sheridan Road known as “The Black House” agreed that our recommendations had to be grounded in an understanding of the institutional mission of the space, a mission that was codified in the May 3rd and 4th agreement of 1968 – the momentous covenant struck between the university and its African American student body. For nearly 50 years, The Black House served as an academic and social hub for Northwestern’s African American students, faculty and staff. What was clear to the prescient students who lobbied for the creation of The Black House a half century ago remains true today: The Black House is not merely a building or a landmark. (We strongly believe that the building deserves landmark status, but to focus on the building without correspondingly talking about what happens in the building is like a brain without a mind or a body without a heart.) To think of The Black House simply as a facility is a fundamental misunderstanding of its historic and contemporary significance.

The ultimate mission of the Black House is to serve as the center of Black student life at Northwestern University (in physical and metaphysical ways) by housing the programs and events, and establishing the relationships necessary to support students' academic, social-emotional and professional growth on campus. It exists as a conduit for Black students and alumni to foster positive bonds, and to be a resource and gathering place where Black students, alumni, faculty and administrators can celebrate their shared experiences on campus. It provides a space where students can learn about themselves and their place in the university and the greater world. The Black House is and has always been a valuable institutional resource at Northwestern, both for people of the Black diaspora and for the complete campus community, which benefits from the scholarship, fellowship and resiliency of well-grounded Black students.

A review of the events that led to this report

In recent years, the utility of The Black House was called into question by some administrators (and, to be fair, others) who maintained that the facility no longer adequately served the needs of contemporary students of African descent. Some suggested that a great many current students were “uncomfortable” gathering in a building established primarily to serve “Black” students. Others even offered that the growing number of students who identify as multi-racial, as well as the adoption of a more “multicultural” approach to student affairs, rendered the preservation of a “Black House” an outmoded concept in a 21st century university context. That thinking led to proposed changes at The Black House that unleashed a firestorm in Northwestern’s community of African American students and alumni.

In the summer of 2015, several student groups with offices in The Black House were informed by representatives of the Office of Student Affairs that their spaces would be consolidated to make room for staff from the Office of Campus Inclusion and Community (CIC), which does very important work with low-income and first-generation students, many of whom also happen to be African American. CIC staff members were to take up residence in The Black House at the start of 2015-2016 academic year. Members of the affected student groups were alarmed by the proposed changes and the timing of the notice and, shortly thereafter, reached out to officers of the Northwestern University Black Alumni Association (NUBAA) to help them craft a response that might halt or alter the University's plans.

The community of Black alumni responded vociferously. In August of 2015, a conference call was convened to discuss the proposed changes with Multicultural Student Affairs Director Charles Kellom. More than 200 alumni and students gathered on the call. Following the conversation, which was contentious at times, alumni were encouraged by NUBAA officers to write President Schapiro, Provost Linzer and Dr. Telles-Irvin to express their opposition to the proposed changes. In response to those missives and the outpouring of fury, Dr. Telles-Irvin announced the establishment of a series of four "listening sessions" to be held during the fall term. The listening sessions were designed to gather input from various Black House stakeholders – faculty, staff, alumni, and most importantly, current students – about the proposed changes. The Committee responsible for this report was assembled at Dr. Telles-Irvin's behest to consider the feedback from the listening sessions and develop recommendations related to the efficacy of The Black House and the proposed changes.

By the end of the third listening session, however, it was abundantly clear that the idea of making changes related to the occupancy of The Black House and the way in which it is used had pierced a nerve in Black students and alumni. As one student eloquently stated, "it wouldn't be a safe space if it was turned into office space," a sentiment that summed up frustrations about the proposed changes. In the eyes of many, the University's plans also represented an effort, in effect, to renege on the covenant the University had entered into with Black students in 1968, following the historic takeover of the Bursar's office. In one listening session, Alexandria Bobbitt, a SESP senior whose mother, father and older brother are all NU alumni, said the proposed changes made her rethink her fidelity to the institution. "Frankly, if this is the way we're going to treat Black students, I seriously don't think I would send my children here," she said.

In light of the palpable anguish expressed by Black students and alumni, and with the encouragement of President Schapiro, Dr. Telles-Irvin announced the abandonment of the proposed changes and amended the Committee's charge to be the development of recommendations related to the improvement of The Black House in accordance with some of the concerns about the facility that were expressed during the listening sessions.

During our deliberations, the Committee reflected on what we heard and saw during the listening sessions, as well as what we read on social media following the sessions. We also gathered additional input from students, alumni and former administrators and consulted the websites of peer institutions that maintain similar Black House-like cultural/student centers for a sense of how these facilities are situated within their campus communities. All of that data informs these recommendations.

About this report

Though the members of this Committee came together with a variety of perspectives about the issues confronting The Black House and its use (or lack thereof), we quickly reached consensus around key concerns. Notably, we concluded that structural and technological upgrades to the facility and the development of robust programming related to the African American experience at Northwestern and its historic connection to Evanston's Black community would do wonders to restore The Black House to its cherished and highly valued position as a center of thought and campus activity and create a new, contemporary space relevant to today's Black students at NU. Let us be clear, however, that it is the consensus of this Committee that The Black House cannot be viewed merely as a "facility" if the University hopes repair the relationships with and restore the trust of its African American stakeholders. While the physical building absolutely must be maintained and enshrined as a valued University landmark, to do only that would neither begin the healing nor adequately address the needs and desires of this community.

Our vision for The Black House focuses on four key areas:

- Programming
- Facility & Structural Issues
- Technology
- Archives

This vision also reflects a categorical rejection of the premise that The Black House has outlived its usefulness and the contention that contemporary students no longer feel the need for such a programmatic and emotional home. Indeed, what came through loud and clear from the listening sessions was a deep yearning among current students for a "safe space" in which to congregate, celebrate and seek academic support. Furthermore, the students' testimonials made patently clear that the current level of inactivity at The Black House was more a function of the facility's deferred maintenance, outmoded technology and paltry programming, all of which these recommendations seek to address. While the Committee applauds the upgrades to The Black House that are currently under way, we strongly encourage the University to make an even greater investment – structurally as well as programmatically – to ensure that The Black is a vibrant academic and cultural center.

Pedagogical support for our vision

While it is important to note that the establishment of The Black House was codified in and mandated by the historic May 3rd & 4th (1968) agreement between the University and the Black students who protested for greater recognition and rights on campus, the vision put forth by this Committee is not rooted in history alone (though it is indeed imperative that we honor that history). There is a significant body of students affairs literature to support the idea that the sense of racial identity – meaning how one views and understands one’s own racial group as well as members of other racial groups – are important to the psychosocial development of college students, particularly students of color. As Raechele Pope, associate professor of educational leadership at SUNY Buffalo, writes:

“To meet their needs as developing individuals, both in terms of racial identity and psychosocial development, the unique history, cultural values, and perspectives of different racial groups must be addressed. Different workshops, personal approaches, mentoring, and advising or counseling efforts may be required in any interventions targeted towards students of color.” (Pope, 2000)

We feel The Black House could be – as it has been in the past – the perfect vehicle for nurturing the developing psychosocial needs of Northwestern’s African American student body, which, as we heard time again in the listening sessions, still needs attention in an environment that many students said feels alien and, at times, hostile to them.

And we would be remiss not to acknowledge that our discussion about the future of The Black House occurs against a contemporary backdrop of unrest, a time when college students all across the country are animated by the micro- and macro-aggressions on their campuses and the senseless deaths of young Black people at the hands of authorities. Those students, including students on our campus, have risen up to demand accountability and redress. Among the much-debated forms of reparation circulating in the academe is the establishment of “safe spaces” that can serve as “identity safe” zones (Steele, 2010) where the cultural, ethnic, and/or sexual identities of often-marginalized students are affirmed and their developmental needs are met.

Even President Schapiro has argued for safe spaces. In his January 15, 2016 op-ed in *The Washington Post*, he writes:

“I’m an economist, not a sociologist or psychologist, but those experts tell me that students don’t fully embrace uncomfortable learning unless they are themselves comfortable. Safe spaces provide that comfort. The irony, it seems, is that the best hope we have of creating an inclusive community is to first create spaces where members of each group feel safe.”

Construction of a “safe space” means more than designating a building. It requires visionary and culturally sensitive leadership and a meaningful programmatic investment to ensure that the space is not only “safe,” but secure from the constant threat of encroachment and is deeply woven into the fabric of the institution.

Programming

A reaffirmation of the University's commitment to its African American stakeholders

Northwestern University's mission statement highlights "the personal and intellectual growth of its students in a diverse academic community." As an outcome of the listening sessions, the Committee endeavored to determine the best way that The Black House could be a resource in furtherance of that goal. We have concluded that Northwestern University should be in alignment with other major universities' best practices, by turning The Black House into a cultural center with appropriate programming. Many institutions with which Northwestern is inclined to compare itself – including the University of Chicago, Yale, Brown, Stanford, Columbia, the University of Pennsylvania, and Georgetown – have established dynamic African American cultural centers that serve as influential hubs of African American thought and intellectual activity. Unlike The Black House at Northwestern, these centers tend to be attractions that are highlighted on campus tours and used as recruitment tools for students and faculty. (Please see appendix A)

Transforming our Black House into a cultural and intellectual center would facilitate the recruitment, retention and matriculation of students of the African Diaspora. These objectives would be accomplished by maintaining an environment that promotes academic excellence and personal achievement, while encouraging and preparing African American students to participate and contribute to the larger University and global community. Turning The Black House into a true cultural center would foster community and intellectual growth while encouraging organic engagement between students, faculty, staff and the Evanston community.

A leadership void that must be filled

Some members of this Committee have the institutional memory to recall a time when The Black House was a more vibrant space. They believe that the decline in use now pointed to as evidence of the facility's obsolescence coincides with the decision to eliminate the position of "Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Director of African American Student Affairs." While several sensitive, energetic and competent people have attempted to serve as the stewards of The Black House in the position of "Assistant Director of Multicultural Student Affairs," their impact has been dulled: first because of their junior status, both as administrators and academics; and second, because of their myriad duties across the multicultural student affairs spectrum. This has resulted in rather pro forma programming that has not sufficiently galvanized nor adequately met the needs of the African American student population.

The Committee took the liberty of reaching out to three of the former Directors of African American Student Affairs who shepherded programming at The Black House in the 1970s, '80s and '90s – before the reorganization of Student Affairs and the downgrade of that senior position. In each of their testimonials (please see appendix B) what came through was not only

a sense of how fully engaged they were in the psychosocial and academic development of Black students, but how singularly committed they – and the staff they were fortunate enough to have – were to ensuring that The Black House, programmatically, socially and academically met the needs of African American students.

This is not to suggest that current multicultural affairs staffers are not equally committed. Time and again, we heard from students that the current staff is friendly and helpful. In our survey of students, one commented that the staff at The Black House made her feel welcomed:

“I love seeing Charles and Ms. Daphne every day and having candy. I love having people know my name and greet me with a smile and hug just to remind me that I matter in a university that does its best to undermine me otherwise.”

Yet, it seems apparent that given their sometimes divided attention, relative inexperience (compared to their predecessors), and the conflicted feelings some in Student Affairs have expressed about the contemporary utility of The Black House, programming in the space has suffered. In light of that observation, the Committee proposes the following recommendations to address this leadership vacuum:

- **Reinstitute an associate dean-level position for African American student affairs:** The Black House is in need of a leader with the gravitas and standing to inspire and mobilize students, faculty, staff and alumni. The position requires an individual with some faculty responsibility (in the past, directors of African American Student Affairs also taught the occasional class) and who has the stature within the institution and outside of it to make The Black House a prominent cultural and academic center.
- **Create a Black House advisory board:** To help ensure the continuity of programming and the sustained mission of the Black House, the Committee proposes the establishment of a Black House Advisory Board composed of faculty, students, staff, alumni and prominent community members. The Black House (Cultural Center) Advisory Board would assist with the development of cultural outreach initiatives, the creation of partnerships with community cultural organizations, and the stewardship of development efforts (grant writing and local fund raising).

Redefining the Black House as a Campus Cultural Center

The Black House as a cultural center should be an exemplary facility, meaning that it should have the sort of sustained University support and resources that would make it integral to the University's mission and enable it to fend off threats to its existence and continuity. The Committee believes that there are certain themes that would make the Black House Cultural Center a crown jewel amongst the University's academic and socio-cultural offerings:

- A focus on leadership & legacy to make the difference
- Building campus connections at all levels;
- Remaining relevant and advancing the institution;
- Community engagement and collaboration;
- Student ownership and a "call to action"
- Alumni engagement and involvement.

These factors are essential to institutionalization. In other words, in order for the Black House to have long-term success, it must be considered by all in authority as a major part of the University. That will only happen if its programming is robust and relevant.

The primary goal of future programming in The Black House (reconstituted as The Black House Cultural Center) should be to advance that part of the University's commitment to the "intellectual growth of its students in a diverse academic community" by providing a well-maintained space for students of African descent that:

- Honors and celebrates the contributions of African Americans to the University's growth and development.
- Promotes and celebrates African American culture.
- Encourage students of African descent to make the most of NU's resources and its increasingly diverse community.
- Provides a 21st century context for connecting the Black House with other institutions within the African Diaspora, locally, nationally and internationally, establishing relationships for collaboration.

Initiatives to Promote Intellectual Growth and Community Connections

- **Create a Center of Leadership Training in The Black House:** A leadership institute with a certificate program is a natural for The Black House. NU is virtually co-located in Chicago, and a large number of NU's Black graduates remain in the Chicago area after completing their studies. NU already has a Center for Leadership, housed in McCormick. Extending that institute's focus for a course in Black leadership would require little extra effort or resources and could pay tremendous benefits in terms of student/alumni engagement. A Black House-based leadership program, involving alumni, would offer a rigorous and thought-provoking way to for enrolled students to learn about their individual leadership strengths and weaknesses from a culturally sensitive, Afro-centric perspective, while identifying gaps in their leadership assets and

providing them with personal coaching on leadership. The leadership program would also include opportunities for internships and experiential Learning.

- **Graduate Students in Residence:** The Black House Graduate Student-in-Residence program would offer current NU graduate students the opportunity to assist in the development and implementation of programming that unites undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff from all sectors of the campus. Graduate Students-in-Residence would help to create and sustain a safe and intellectually stimulating Black House environment and would receive financial support for their services and serve as mentors for undergraduate. They would also provide program assistance for the center for leadership training.
- **Create a Scholars-in-Residence Program:** The Scholar-in-Residence program would provide scholars, artists, writers and communal professionals the opportunity to be “in residence” at The Black House, while working on significant projects in the field of African American or African Diaspora studies. This would be similar to the artist-in-residence for the Alice Kaplan Humanities Institute.
- **Develop programs that promote community engagement:** These programs should include both academic and community-based events. In the past, The Black House sponsored events like “A Musical Evening with our Elders,” a showcase of talent and creativity that brought local performers, poets and other artists to campus and rallied both the Evanston and Northwestern communities. Other events could include:
 - Leadership retreats
 - Lecture series
 - Community forums

Provide opportunities for academic coaching and support

- **Academic Advising:** One of the key factors that made The Black House a source of support for previous generations of students was the presence of academic advisers. The Committee recommends that the University return to providing academic advising by school or major as a resource in the Black House. Early intervention is essential to successful matriculation, and having an alternative advising source in The Black House could provide an additional layer of assistance for students who sometimes suffer from “imposter syndrome” (a feeling that their admission to the institution was somehow a mistake) and are uncomfortable turning to their assigned advisers for help.
- **Tutoring:** In addition, the Committee recommends that The Black House enlist graduate students and higher-level undergraduates to provide regular tutoring in a wide range of courses.
- **Academic Resources:** The Black House Library needs to be reconstituted and equipped with better resources to facilitate the above activities.

Facility & Structural Improvements

Creating a space for all students

Deferred maintenance, non-compliance with ADA standards and the lack of state-of-the-art technology have prevented the Black House from becoming the sort of vibrant, welcoming student center and learning environment it was intended to be. In our listening sessions, surveys and informal conversations about what students found lacking about The Black House, many said the limited and outdated technology meant they had little reason to go there. The upgrades recommended below are designed to address the long-overdue structural, technological and aesthetic improvements that are needed to bring the Black House in line with other academic buildings on campus, while also creating an environment that would enhance the student experience and facilitate the sorts of programming that would better connect the facility with students, administrators and the community at large. (Please see Appendix C for a schematic of the proposed structural changes.)

Overall House & Exterior: Proposed Improvements.

Like any building constructed in the early 20th century, The Black House is in desperate need of the kind of infrastructure improvements that would make it more suitable for contemporary students. Inattention to the facility's structural inadequacies have made the often-repeated contention that "students don't want to use the Black House" a self-fulfilling prophecy. To bring the Black House into the 21st century, our recommendations are to:

- **Overhaul the HVAC system:** This would include upgrading the heating and cooling systems and installing new windows and insulation for better temperature regulation
- **Upgrade the electrical panel:** The current electrical system will not support the technological improvements recommended here.
- **Install an elevator:** Currently, The Black House is not fully accessible for individuals with disabilities or impairments that would make it difficult for them to climb stairs. We recommend making the House fully ADA compliant.
- **Soundproof a portion of the basement:** The multiple uses we recommend for the House include the creation of a rehearsal space in the basement, a change that would require muffling the sound so as not to disturb programming and academic activities on the floors above.

- **Create a keycard/Wildcard entry system:** While the need to secure The Black House to safeguard students and prevent theft is paramount, locking the facility after regular business hours has also deterred use. We recommend instituting a keycard system that would provide students with after-hour access. For safety purposes, we also recommend installing cameras at the entry and in select rooms to be monitored by campus police.

Second-floor: Purpose and Improvements

The second floor would remain largely student space. We recommend technology upgrades to the study room, including the addition/installation of software that would make the space more conducive to the needs of students in STEM fields, and upgrades to the resource center, which currently is outmoded and, consequently, underused. In addition, the Committee recommends using the space in the northwest corner of the second floor as a spot where periodic artifacts from the (new) NUBAA archives can be displayed, particularly showcasing alumni memorabilia during their major homecoming years.

Third-floor: Purpose and Improvements

The third floor would retain office space for student groups as well as a conference room. In addition, the office of Director of African American Student Affairs would reside on the third floor.

Basement: Purpose and Improvements

As everyone knows, Northwestern is awash in talent and performing groups. Many of the African American performing groups, however, have no permanent home and seek a space for rehearsal and congregation. The basement, the Committee feels, could be renovated to fulfill those needs. We recommend establishing a performance space with flooring and mirrors to accommodate dancers, acquiring a piano for use by musical groups, and soundproofing the space to prevent the activity from disturbing students in meetings and studying above. For safety purposes, the space needs ample lighting, and should probably be outfitted with video monitoring.

Technology

Modernizing for the Class of 2019

The lack of sufficient up-to-date technology in The Black House is a huge deterrent for students. Many complained to us that the two computers in The Black House are often inoperable. And students in STEM fields lamented the fact that none of the computers in the facility are loaded with the software they need to complete assignments. (This was a complaint echoed by students in Medill and Weinberg who also use programs like the Adobe suite for design or STATA or SPSS for statistical analysis.) Below are some of students' most-cited soft- and hardware requests:

Technology needs:

- **Engineering, STEM students:** MATLAB and Solidworks, AUTOCAD and Siemens for NX for Design.
- **Medill/RTF Students:** Adobe InDesign and Creative Suite; Photoshop
- **Weinberg:** STATA, SPSS
- **Create a “freenters” station:** A Freenters station (They have these stations around campus – Allison, Kemper and Norris, for example.). Freenters allow students to print a certain number of sheets (color or black-and-white) for any given month. Include paper with free printing.
- **Develop a mechanism for iPad rental:** Many students feel at a disadvantage because they cannot afford to purchase an iPad for presentations or class use. A system for renting these would be helpful.

The Committee has two final recommendations: First, that each floor be equipped with sufficient charging stations/outlets to meet student need; second, that flat-screen monitors be installed in the corridors to display announcements and showcase NUBAA archival information.

Archives

Catching up to history, preserving and presenting it

The Committee understands that an agreement has been reached by the University and the Northwestern University Black Alumni Association regarding support for a “NUBAA Archive” project. It is important to note that we agree that the establishment of a method of collecting and archiving memorabilia related to the Black student experience at Northwestern is of vital importance. We value the vast amount of research that has gone into developing the NUBAA plan and are pleased that the University is supporting the initiative in a significant way.

It is important to affirm that this Committee supports the establishment of the NUBAA Archives to conserve, digitize, arrange, manage, protect, provide providence for and make accessible memorabilia related to the Black-student experience at Northwestern University.

Further, we recommend that The Black House serve as the primary venue for receiving and exhibiting these memorabilia, thus encouraging a new generation of students to reflect on a distinct aspect of the University’s past and allowing alumni to reflect on and celebrate their particular places in history.

Our primary recommendation regarding the NUBAA Archives in The Black House is to curate a rotating exhibit of items (tangible materials), photographs and video that can be viewed at The Black House and shared via social media. The exhibit (a two- or three-dimensional wall or case display), photos and video would be comprised of items from the larger collection held in archives, and designed to encourage students and visitors to deepen their knowledge of Black-student history by visiting the University’s reference collection and archives for more insights.

We also recommend the following activities:

- Install an appropriately sized flat-screen monitor in the entry vestibule of The Black House to play videos and slideshows about the history of the facility (along with slides that promote The Black House and relevant campus-based events)
 - One such video would be the one produced by FMO about the takeover of the Bursar's office (based on availability)
- Collaborate with NUBAA to host a campaign to solicit memorabilia (photos, largely) and stories (written and oral) from alumni about their experiences in The Black House with their classmates, staff, faculty and guests; engage graduate-level or undergraduate students who have an interest in cultural anthropology and history to receive this information and curate it, particularly for the aforementioned rotating exhibit, series of photographs and videos.
 - Many NU alumni organizations already have student liaisons. The University can fund positions for NUBAA liaisons whose primary responsibilities will be to receive Black alumni archival materials, facilitate the delivery of these materials

to a proper archival facility, and work with archivists to curate these materials into an exhibit, photography display and/or video. These could be work-study positions based in the Black House itself, working from the NUBAA office.

- Install one-dimensional "way-finding" signage on the walls of The Black House that offer historical perspectives, as well as directions to/purpose of, each room.
 - For example, signs could both name a room ("Study Room") and reference notable Black alumni; identify the administrative office and celebrate past Directors; guide visitors to second-floor space and mark special dates from the African American student experience on campus.
- Create a brochure or rack card about The Black House's creation/development, and its current purpose as a cultural center, which can be distributed to students and families who tour the campus, as well as to anyone who visits the house, and to ALL incoming freshmen as part of their conversations on diversity and inclusion during the first days of the first quarter.
- Identify space within The Black House for the proper receipt of memorabilia from NUBAA members or other alumni, to be held temporarily until the materials are moved to a formal archival space for recording, assessment and preservation.

In Closing

We would like to thank Dr. Telles-Irvin for inviting us to participate in this important and illuminating process. Though the initiative was born out of a moment of great strife and agitation, it has provided all of us in the Northwestern community with an opportunity to reflect on the institution of The Black House and the space it occupies, both physically and in the hearts and minds of African American students, faculty and alumni, as well as the University community-at-large.

The vision put forth in this document is tendered in a spirit of good-will and collegiality, and with full recognition of the very difficult (and wonderful) work undertaken by members of the Office of Student Affairs. Still, as Dr. Lesley-Ann Brown Henderson acknowledged at the opening of one of the listening sessions, often well-meaning individuals with the best of intentions make missteps that land them in a place where their actions inflame passions and rend feelings, no matter how benign the intent. That was the state of the University at the time this Committee began its deliberations.

This vision is offered in the hope that it will both repair the rift between the University and some of its African American stakeholders, and also restore functionality and relevance to The Black House in recognition of the covenant the University entered into with Black students in May of 1968. We can think of no better time than now – as we approach the 50th anniversary of that historic agreement – for the University to rededicate itself to making The Black House a cynosure of thought, culture and community engagement.

We trust that this document will receive serious consideration, and we look forward to entering into a dialogue with you about ways in which we can continue to be of service as plans progress.

Appendix A: African American Cultural Centers at Peer Institutions

Yale's Afro-American Cultural Center: Focuses on the African Diaspora, learning about it and promoting the traditions of it. The Social Justice program engages students in discussion and allows them to serve their communities in support of Black cultures.

<http://afam.yalecollege.yale.edu>

Brown's Brown Center for Students of Color: Has a strategic planning committee made up of students and faculty that devises a five-year plan on critical reflection and "informed action, leadership development, and social justice education for students of color and their allies." Another unique aspect about the Brown Center is the Third World Transition Program (TWTP) that introduces new students to the support structures and resources available to them. The Minority Peer Counselor Program (MPC) raises awareness of the barriers that challenge minority students' ability to thrive.

<https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/students-of-color/>

Cornell's Ujamaa Residential College: A dorm for students of all grade levels. "Ujamaa celebrates the rich and diverse heritage of Black people in the United States, Africa, the Caribbean, and other regions of the world."

<https://living.sas.cornell.edu/live/wheretolive/programhouses/ujamaa.cfm>

Dartmouth's Shabazz Center for Intellectual Inquiry: A residential site that plans activities in conjunction with faculty of the African and African American Studies Program.

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/livinglearning/communities/shabazz.html>

Columbia's Malcolm X Lounge: Located on the first floor of Hartley Hall. A shared space by the Black Students Organization, African Students Association and Caribbean Students Association for weekly general and executive board meetings. When not being used, the lounge is locked and not open to unregistered events.

<https://www.cc-seas.columbia.edu/OMA/studentorg>

The University of Pennsylvania's W.E.B. Du Bois College House: It is described as "a center for Black intellectuals searching diligently for an African identity and perspective within a historically White institution of higher learning."

http://dubois.house.upenn.edu/house_history

UPenn's Makuu: The Black Cultural Center: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/makuu/About.php>

Stanford's Black Community Services Center: Has individual advising and programs that foster an environment for intellectual exploration. The Partners for Academic Excellence (PAE) program is for freshman who are mentored in small groups by graduate students and upperclassmen, as well as Black faculty and alumni.

<https://bcsc.stanford.edu>

Georgetown's Black House: Programs include weekly Hour Glass discussions on topics relevant to the community, a voter registration program, a panel on the impact on the Latino Vote, a workshop on developing a self-brand, and a dance workshop partnering with Groove Theory.

<https://cmea.georgetown.edu/blackhouse>

Appendix B: Testimonials from former directors of African American Student Affairs

Milton J. Wiggins (1973 – 1977)

The Northwestern University Black House has a rich history, and for many it is the focal point of Black student life on campus. It is often referred to as home away from home.

The Black House is a symbolic building, visibly indicating that there is a Black student community on campus. One can also conclude that the existence of the Black House is a measure of the University's commitment to address the many barriers that often hinder some Black students' progress in a very competitive academic environment.

Many of the barriers that often negatively impact Black students are rooted in the historical effects of slavery, institutional racism and other past and current injustices exercised by Black America.

The programs, services, and activities emanating from the black house have proven to be an effective method of assisting thousands of students to adjust, and achieve in a sometime alienating and always competitive environment. The need for such supportive services has been validated by studies after studies.

Several Big Ten and other prestigious universities have more fully embraced its Black student population, Black faculty and administrators by creating a Black Culture Center. The creation of a Black Culture Center will allow for a more systematic and inclusive approach to implementing needed programs, services and activities. It is widely understood and accepted that Black Houses on many predominantly white campuses were the result of student protest and demands. Black Culture Centers are often the results of a collective effort on part of a diverse group of students, faculty, and alumni and other component of the University community.

The advantages of a Black Culture Center are many:

- Commitment to academic excellence through quality educational, cultural and social program that promote awareness.
- Offers educational, cultural and social programs for Black students and all other Northwestern students.
- Encourage a collaboration efforts and strategies for building bridges between diverse groups on campus and in the extended community.
- Encourage Alumni giving,
- Supporting the University efforts in recruitment and retention of Black students

The creation of a Black Culture Center on Northwestern University Campus will serve as a bridge connecting Northwestern University to the Black experience, and serve as a resource for research and other scholarly endeavors.

Alice Palmer (1977 – 1985)

"The Black Northwestern University students who took over the Bursar's office in May 1968 to protest NU's exclusionary practices demanded an institutionalized, sustainable presence for Black students on campus. Their demands were realized when African American Student Affairs was established in what we affectionately called The Black House – a home away from home, a refuge, a support, an exciting, stimulating source of ideas."

I was honored to be Associate Dean of Students and Director of African American Student Affairs following Milton Wiggins, and with his blessing, along with an incomparable staff. Essie Williams, the heart and soul of the Black House. Jerré Michelin who always knew what to say. Everne Saxton who knew everything about the ins and outs of the University to help students navigate their ways. Ulysses "Duke" Jenkins, regal elder who affirmed our Black history.

Together we launched programs befitting the history and purpose of The Black House and reinforced our viable presence on campus. An Evening with Our Elders introduced jazz and blues legends like Alberta Hunter and Willie Pickens to a packed auditorium of young people. Sunday Suppers let small groups of students engage with people like Louis Martin, Special Advisor to Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Carter, and Congressman Harold Washington. The Christmas Bazaar that began with a table of exquisite baby clothes crocheted by Essie and Jerré and burgeoned onto two floors. In partnership with Women's Studies, the Black House hosted Jamaica's First Lady Beverly Manley at a monthly brown bag lunch, brought Dr. Marion Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund to campus, and worked with NU's Alpha Phi Alpha chapter to launch the Martin Luther King annual lecture.

There were times when the Black House mounted push-backs. We stood up against NU's investment in apartheid South Africa. We supported Black Athletes United in the Light when they challenged onerous practices in the Athletic Department. We successfully demanded that the decision denying beloved Professor Leon Forrest be reversed.

Throughout the decades The Black House has represented the living history of African Americans on Northwestern University's campus."

Karla Spurlock-Evans (1985 – 1999)

I served as Director of African American Student Affairs and Associate Dean of Students at Northwestern from 1985 – 1999. I will be forever thankful for the time I worked at Northwestern, for the enduring friendships I developed with colleagues, and for the opportunity to know and help support amazing, talented students. I have worked at many institutions – SUNY-Albany, Haverford College, Lake Forest College, and for the past sixteen years, Trinity College. What was unique about serving as a dean at the Black House during those years was being connected tangibly to living history. The Black House was an organic institution whose enduring presence ensured that successive generations of students negotiated the difficult, sometimes alien and alienating terrain of a historically white research university and emerged on the other side whole, strong, resilient – with degree in hand.

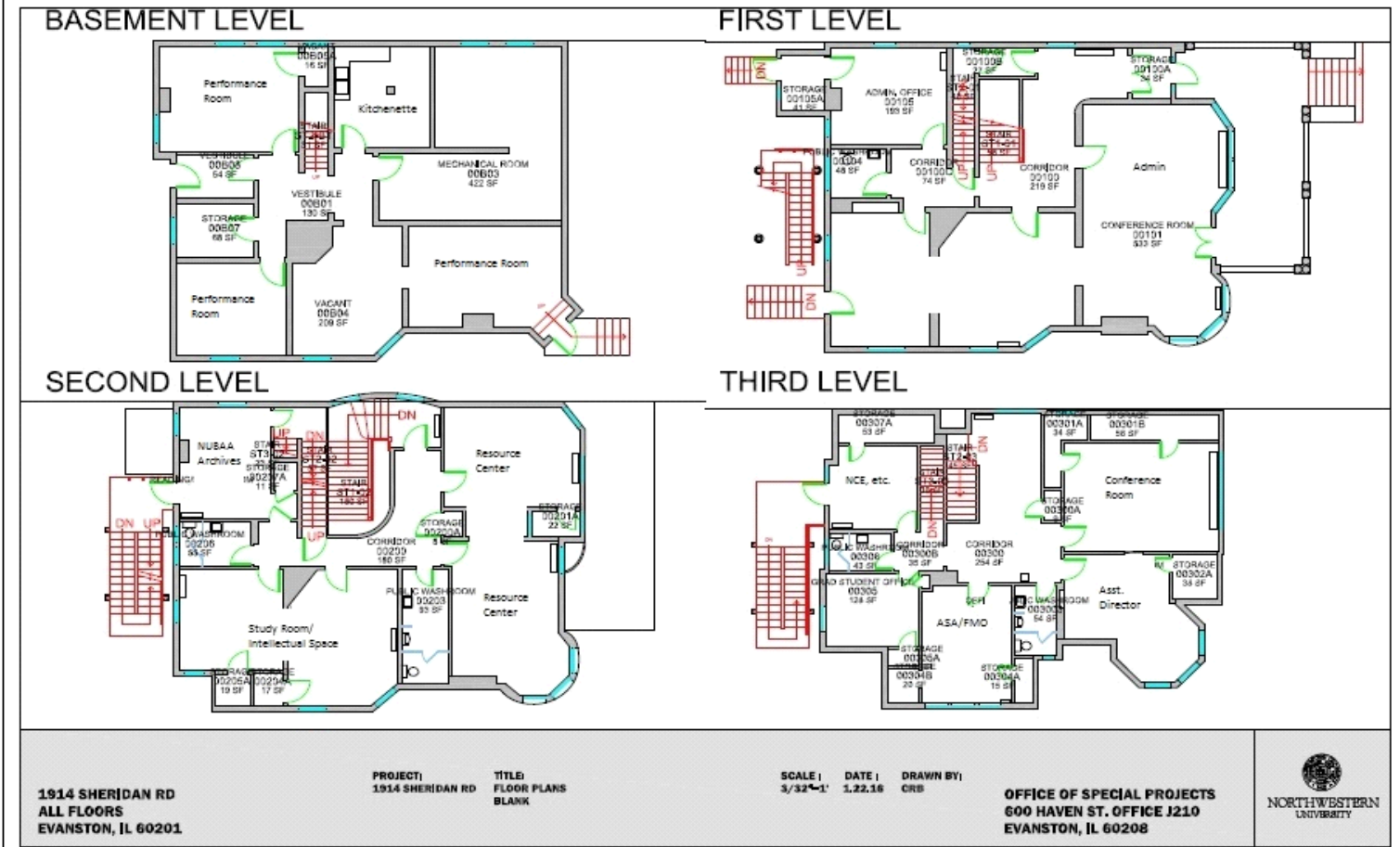
The Black House was a home away from home for some and a centering hub for others. Some regarded it as a way station – a country store – an oasis in the midst of an urbane but impersonal academic desert. The Black House struck a fine balance between providing a space where African American Student Affairs offered mentoring as well as cultural and academic programming and providing the base for myriad activities students created to weave their own network of support. We functioned like an intergenerational family. A wonderfully diverse group of young adults were placed in close proximity to older adults: two warm, non-judgmental mothers/secretaries, a well-traveled, philosophically-grounded elder who always had a profound story and deep cultural knowledge to share, and two sincere and caring aunts/deans, who, though stylistically very different, held high standards and provided guidance and sound advice. Somehow we managed to strike a successful balance between giving students an opportunity to be autonomous and creative and providing what today would be called “intrusive advising.” At the Black House students knew they would interact with adults who had been placed among them to monitor academic and social adjustment, to listen, to offer advice, to support, to comfort, and to celebrate their achievements. Over the years, the staff provided stability and continuity as students cycled through.

Although administrators were housed at the Black House, during my time there we took care to preserve the students’ sense of ownership. Indeed, many students found their footing at Northwestern through their connection to the Black House. Generations of students developed leadership and professional skills in service to the range of pre-professional organizations they created: a drama group, a dance group, a gospel choir, a student newspaper, a council for Greek-letter organizations – all under the umbrella of For Members Only, the overarching Black student organization. The Black House, encompassing the Department of African American Student Affairs and FMO and its many satellite organizations, sought to chronicle and preserve the history and proud traditions of Black students at Northwestern. Together we were able to link students to one another and to those who came before, connect them to the University’s many resources, and inspire in them an awareness of themselves as men and women of agency, ability, and purpose.

I sincerely hope that Northwestern, in seeking to meet the needs of students who hold multiple ethnic and social identities in a time of fiscal constraint, will pay close attention to why and how the Black House came to exist and the fundamental role it has played in sustaining generations of Black students at Northwestern. For almost half a century the Office of African American Student Affairs collaborated with students to create an environment where they were able to survive and thrive. The members of the Northwestern Black Alumni Association maintain a strong affiliation with Northwestern in part because they became a family in struggle and triumph at The Black House. Please do not excise the living heart of Northwestern's African American student community.

Appendix C:

Schematic of proposed facility changes



**The Black House
Facility Review Committee
Facility Recommendations**

Issue

After several weeks of deliberation and incorporating feedback and comments from students, alumni, faculty, and staff, The Black House Task Force issued its report on March 29, 2016, to Dr. Patricia Telles-Irvin, Vice President for Student Affairs. One of the recommendations involved several facility updates to the Black House.

Black House Task Force Report

From the recent report, due to deferred maintenance issues and poor technology, the committee recommended several facility and structural improvements, to include a new HVAC system, upgraded electrical panel, installation of an elevator, soundproofing and making use of a portion of the basement, and installing a WildCARD access system. Many changes to where certain functions should reside in the Black House are also recommended.

Facility History

Previous aesthetic work has occurred in The Black House and the MCC in the past five years:

- In the 2012-2013 academic year, the lighting in both the Black House and the MCC were updated, and additional furniture was added to the lobby spaces.
- In the summer of 2015, painting occurred in The Black House and the MCC. During the 2015-2016 academic year, the flooring was replaced in the MCC only.
- In the Winter Quarter of 2016, an assessment by Risk Management, Student Affairs, and Facilities Management occurred on the basement of The Black House to determine if the space could be used for group meetings and/or events. It was determined that significant work would need to occur to make this space in The Black House usable.

Analysis

The Black House, constructed in 1884, has significantly outdated systems, and no substantive work (other than aesthetic and some upgrades as mentioned above) has occurred in the space since Northwestern acquired the building in 1937. Because of this, and in reviewing the requests outlined in the Black House Task Force report, we believe that the work for The Black House would involve a full recapitalization.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on this information, it is recommended that:

- Northwestern University hire an architect to begin a feasibility study to include a cost estimate on what a full recapitalization of The Black House would entail;
- A similar feasibility study be done on the MCC, and with the Religious and Spiritual Life spaces in Parkes Hall, given that these spaces are also significant to many underrepresented students at Northwestern;
- Once the recapitalization project plan is completed for The Black House, considerable thought needs to be given to where the temporary location for The Black House will be during the project, as the duration will exceed a three-month summer period.

General Timeframe

This approach would result in the following general timeframe:

- Strategic Space Committee – July 2016
- Architect Hired – August/September 2016
- Feasibility Study – to include involvement from key stakeholders, facility condition assessment, and programmatic evaluation from the Task Force report – Fall Quarter 2016
- Recommendations and Cost Estimate – Late Fall Quarter 2016/Early Winter 2017

The Black House Facility Review Committee - Technology

Committee Recommendations	Installed on BH Lab Machines: Y/N	Installed on MCC Lab Machines: Y/N	Reason for delay	Notes
Microsoft Office Suite	Y	Y		
Symantec Endpoint Protection (virus protection)	Y	Y		
Adobe CC Suite: Acrobat® DC Pro Bridge® CC Dreamweaver® CC 2015 Fireworks® CS6 Flash Builder® Premium Flash® Professional CC 2015** Illustrator® CC 2015 InDesign® CC 2015 Photoshop® CC 2015 Premiere® Pro CC 2015**	Y	Y		
MATLAB	Y	Y		
STATA	Y	Y		
SPSS	Y	Y		
Solidworks	Y	Y		Solidworks cannot be installed on Macs but was installed on all PCs at both the Blackhouse and MCC locations
AUTOCAD	Y	Y		
Siemens for NX Design	N (anticipated date: 5/23)	N (anticipated date: 5/23)	We are working to get this software at no cost by leveraging the existing contract NU has in place. This has caused some delays with the vendor.	Similar to Solidworks, we will only be installing Siemens on the PCs because the software is not compatible with the Mac platform.

The Black House Facility Review Committee
Time Table: Major Initiatives to Address the Black Student Experience at Northwestern

- 1) Program Review of Multicultural Student Affairs
- 2) Black House Facility Review Task Force
- 3) Black Student Experience Committee
- 4) Black House Listening Sessions

Fall, 2013	Program Review of Multicultural Student Affairs: Self Study
2014-2015	Learning outcomes assessment project. MSA's 2014-2015 project is focused on their student intern (worker) development in the areas of intercultural competency and leadership
Fall, 2014	Program Review of Multicultural Student Affairs: Campus Visit
Fall, 2014	Program Review of Multicultural Student Affairs: Final Report
Fall, 2014	The InclusionNU Programming Fund as created to support student organization programming that aligns with the mission of the Campus Inclusion and Community units
Winter, 2015	Position descriptions were reviewed and rewritten
Spring, 2015	"Think Tank" meetings were held to create integrated missions, programmatic and activity level learning outcomes
May 11, 2015	CIC goal of forming a Black Student Experience Task Force and provide recommendations on ways to increase the Black student satisfaction by summer 2016 was submitted to the Vice President of Student Affairs and to the President
Summer, 2015	Program Review of Multicultural Student Affairs: One-year Review
October 14, 2015	Listening Session
October 28, 2015	Black House Listening Committee-Student Meeting
October 28, 2015	Black Student Experience Task Force invitations were sent
November 11, 2015	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #1 (setting the context)
November 16, 2015	Listening Session
November 20, 2015	Listening Session
December 2, 2015	Black House Recommendations: from C Kellom to C Whitaker
December 2, 2015	Black House Recommendations: from NUBAA to C Whitaker
December 3, 2015	Fall Classes End
December 4, 2015	Reading Period Ends – WCAS Students Only
December 5, 2015	Fall Examinations Begin
December 9, 2015	Fall Break begins 6 p.m.
December 10, 2015	Fall Examinations End
December 3, 2015	Fall Classes End
January 3, 2016	Winter Classes Begin

January 20, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #2 (reviewing the data)
January 26, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #3 (reviewing the data)
February 05, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #4 (reviewing the data and developing a plan)
February 19, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #5 (focus group preparation)
March 04, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #6 (focus group preparation)
March 11, 2016	Winter Classes End
March 17, 2016	Winter Break Begins
March 26, 2016	Winter Break Ends
March 29, 2016	Spring Classes Begin
March 29, 2016	Invitations for the Black Student Experience Focus Groups were sent
March 29, 2016	Black House Facility Review Committee submit their report
April 11-14, 2016	Six Black Student Experience Focus Groups were conducted
April 26, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #7 (finalizing the survey and listening to focus group recordings)
April 26, 2016	Black Student Experience Survey was sent
May 10, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #8 (report structure discussed)
May 20, 2106	Black House Facility Review Committee Meeting with Dr. Linzer, Dr. Telles-Irvin
May 24, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #9 (focus group and survey data analysis)
May 29, 2016	Memorial Day
May 30, 2016	Reading Period Begins – WCAS Students Only
June 3, 2016	Spring Classes End
June 3, 2016	Spring Classes End
June 7, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Meeting #10
July, 2016	Strategic Space Committee
Fall, 2016	Hire an architect
September 1, 2016	Black Student Experience Task Force Recommendations dues to university leadership
Fall, 2016	Feasibility study begins
Winter, 2017	Plan for construction determined based on students' schedule

**The Black House Facility Review Committee
Summary of Programs**

Multicultural Student Affairs (MSA) continually sponsors a multitude of activities in the Black House. They range from panel discussions about identity, to movie nights, to healing spaces. During the 2014-2015 academic year, there were:

18 staff-sponsored programs with 43 instances of programming.

32 student-sponsored programs with 61 instances of programming.

Staff Sponsored Programs 2014-2015 (alphabetical order by title)

1. **Annual Homecoming Reception:** Every year, MSA sponsors a Homecoming reception for alumni in the Black House. The reception consistently has over 200 people in attendance.
2. **Barbershop Talks:** A gathering space for students to discuss identity and issues impacting Black men. A professional barber is hired to give free haircuts to any student wanting one. Lunch is provided. Sponsored at least twice a year.
4. **Bisque-ware Painting:** Using the ARTtica Studios in Norris, this staff-sponsored program engages a student's creative side. (12/3/14)
5. **Black Art Initiative Programs and a Reception:** This is a brown-bag lunch series invites faculty in to discuss the arts in the Black community. Dr. Ivy Wilson and Dr. Harvey Young were faculty who participated. (10/24/14, 11/10/14, 1/16/15, 3/2/15, 6/4/15)
6. **Black House Community Meetings:** Held on the first Wednesday of every month, the Black House Community Meetings create a space for all Black students to gather and build community. Dinner is provided. The agenda varies each month from critical conversations about current events such as Black Lives Matter, to reflection on the definition of Blackness as an identity, to simple and fun icebreakers and games to help people get to know one another. (10/1/14, 11/5/14, 12/3/14, 1/7/15, 2/4/15, 3/4/15, 4/1/15, 5/6/15, 6/3/15)
7. **Black Women Representation in Film:** As a part of Black History and Heritage Month, staff hosted this program. (2/23/15)
8. **Finals Study Breaks:** Snacks provided near noon during exam weeks for fall and winter quarters.
9. **Free Your Mind – Mental Health Workshop (co-sponsored by CAPS):** MSA sponsors workshops targeted toward important issues and hot topics facing Black students. Mental health is one such major concern, and Free Your Mind is an example of one such workshop. Led by Charles Kellom and Dr. Henry Perkins from CAPS, students reflected on the importance of mental health; discussed the stigma around help-seeking with the Black community; and were given a handout of campus and community resources.
10. **Harambee:** Festival-like event for kick-off to Black History Month in the winter quarter.
11. **Healing Space (impromptu, co-sponsored by Sodexo, Norris University Center, and Student Affairs Auxiliary Services):** The Black House regularly plays a role of support to student activism and healing. After one of the many shootings of an unarmed Black person was highlighted again in the news, a group of students decided to stage a die-in at the Northwestern Arch. It was a very cold day, and the students, focused on their activism, had not necessarily prepared themselves to brave it. Students took turns laying on the ground in front of the Arch for two-hour shifts. Charles Kellom reached out to the university partners listed above who provided free hot chocolate for students before and after their shifts. After the program, MSA staff met informally with students who participated and witnessed the protest to process and discuss their emotions. (11/26/14)
12. **Let's Talk (sponsored by CAPS):** Every week, a professional counselor from CAPS offers free, drop-in one-on-one discussion and counseling in the Black House. The counselor personally identifies as Black, and utilizes the event to connect students with CAPS as a resource, and further their outreach on campus.
13. **"My Story is Unique:" A Lecture & Panel on the Black Student Athlete Experience:** This event featured current and alumni Black student athletes discussing their experiences and unique challenges. In addition, Dr. Johari Shuck from Indiana University shared her research on the topic.
14. **Snack Breaks:** Held in both the Black House and the MCC, these snack breaks provide a welcome break, sustenance and the opportunity to build community. (4/22/15, 4/23/15, 4/29/15, 4/30/15, 5/6/15, 5/13, 5/20/15, 5/27/15, 6/3/15)
15. **Student Leader Round-table:** (10/14/14, 2/12/15, 4/15/15)

16. **Student Staff Meetings and a Retreat:** Student employment provides a leadership opportunity for students to work in the Black House. Ongoing meetings and trainings are a part of the employment experience, as are conversations about transferable skill development for a job after graduation. (9/28/14, 5/29/15)
17. **The JOY: Journey of Our Years:** Celebration of Black graduates held in spring quarter.
18. **Town Hall:** (5/22/15)
19. **VIP Meeting:** Students presented demands to the President and members of his administration. (10/31/15)

Student Sponsored Programs 2014-2015 (alphabetical order by title)

1. **All Black Everythang:** by Delta Sigma Theta (5/13/15)
2. **Beat the Drum:** Alpha Kappa Alpha (4/11/15)
3. **Black Family Reunion BBQ:** FMO sponsors an annual BBQ in the Black House at the start of the school year to welcome students and help them make connections. MSA co-sponsors, but this is student led and staff supported. (9/24/14)
4. **Black Graduate Student Association Meetings and Programs** (12/3/14, 4/22/15, 4/24/15, 4/25/15)
5. **CaribFest:** This program by CaribNation celebrates black students from the Caribbean nations. (5/28/15)
6. **Dillo T-shirt Sale:** FMO (5/26/15, 5/27/15, 5/28/15)
7. **DOJO:** The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) hosted DOJO, Don't Only Just Observe, is an "expression collective," an inclusive community that brings students together from across campus to speak their minds through rhyme, verse and music. (10/11/14, 1/24/15, 3/14/15)
8. **Feed My Starving Children:** Delta Sigma Theta community service trip into the community (3/4/15, 3/14/15)
9. **Know Your Identity:** This was a co-sponsored program by FMO, ASA, and CaribNation. (2/5/15)
10. **Love The Skin You're In:** Delta Sigma Theta (2/27/15)
11. **NABJ Concert:** the National Association of Black Journalists in Medill hosted a concert in the Ryan Auditorium. (2/27/15)
12. **NCE (Northwestern Community Ensemble Meetings):** (9/25/14, 10/2/14, 11/20/14, 12/4/14)
13. **NCE Rehearsal and Concert:** (3/7/15, 3/8/15)
14. **NSBE on Ice:** Using the Norris ice rink, NSBE sponsored an ice-skating party. (1/31/15)
15. **NSBE Social:** (3/6/15)
16. **NSBE Senior Banquet:** (5/29/15)
17. **Out Da Box Auditions, Rehearsals, and Spring Show:** (10/9/14, 10/12/14, 4/5/15, 4/6/15, 4/7/15, 4/8/15, 4/9/15, 4/10/15, 4/11/15, 4/12/15)
18. **ODBreaktheInternet:** (4/21/15)
19. **Pretty Rhomantic Affair:** Alpha Kappa Alpha (2/18/15)
20. **Sigma Gamma Rho Info Sessions** (10/6/14, 10/13/14, 11/11/14, 11/16/14)
21. **Sigma Gamma Rho Events:** (12/1/14, 12/3/14, 12/6/14, 4/19/15, 5/15/15)
22. **So Sweet Bake Sales:** Zeta Phi Beta (11/24/14, 4/17/15, 5/8/15)
23. **Splash of Dimes:** Zeta Phi Beta (5/23/15)
24. **Spring Open Mic Night:** FMO (5/23/15)
25. **State of the Black Union and Reception:** This FMO tradition was co-hosted by the National Association of Black Journalists in Medill and brought Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin, to campus. (11/4/14)
26. **Study Break:** Another NSBE sponsored event, this study break pulled students together to take time and give their brains a rest during reading week. (12/4/14)
27. **The Cookout:** Alpha Phi Alpha
28. **The Ritual:** FMO (9/24/15)
29. **Voter Registration:** Delta Sigma Theta (9/23/14)
30. **Winter Quarter Kick-off:** Kappa Alpha Psi (1/10/15)
31. **Zeta Phi Beta Meet and Greet** (2/28/15)
32. **Zeta Phi Beta 10 Year Celebration** (5/23/15)