

BSU goal: to create Black atmosphere



D.C. Gudger

Photo by Peter Grant

By GORDON MacCRACKEN
Of the Emerald

More than 15,000 students are presently enrolled at the University. Approximately 400 or 500 of them are Black. It is for those students that the Black Student Union exists.

The Black Student Union (BSU), according to BSU president LeFrancis Arnold, was established at the University in 1967. Prior to that the BSU had been connected with Project 75, a federally-funded program.

The BSU separated from Project 75 in order to become political; Arnold noted that funding of Project 75 could have been cut off if the BSU had become political while still connected with the program.

The BSU's goal, said Arnold in a recent interview, is "To create a Black atmosphere on campus." He proceeded to point out that the BSU has attempted and will continue to attempt to establish a political, social and economic base on campus for all Black students. Arnold also mentioned that all Black students at the University, whether they be from the United States or foreign countries are welcome to participate in BSU affairs.

The money for the various programs and activities that are undertaken by the BSU comes from ASUO incidental fees. Until recently, the president and vice-president of the BSU held the only salaried positions in the organization; the ASUO Constitution made provisions that only ten per cent of funds allocated to programs could be used for wages.

The BSU, however, went before the Fiscal Committee of the ASUO Senate and asked that all funds distributed to the organization be transferred so they could be used for work-study jobs. The request was approved and six paid positions in the BSU were created — vice-president, office manager, head secretary and three assistant secretaries. Four people have been hired to fill the

positions. Arnold is now the only unsalaried BSU executive.

Arnold explained that his job is basically that of a co-ordinator — "I make sure everything's running right," he said, noting that he is the one to take the credit or blame for the BSU's actions.

Presently Arnold, vice-president D.C. Gudger and other BSU executives are involved in extensive meetings to set up the organization's calendar for the next two or three months. Basically, said Arnold, "We're planning activities to bring the Black community together."

"We need input from the people," said Gudger. "We hope in the future to get all Blacks interested in the BSU. It must be part of their University being."

Gudger also mentioned that the BSU is "very interested" in ASUO affairs. "It (the ASUO) has a great deal to do with what goes on. We're automatically affected by the ASUO," he said.

Gudger said that while the BSU doesn't function as a political party in ASUO elections, Black students who are active in the BSU often run for ASUO offices. Last year, he said, ten Black students ran for the ASUO Senate. Nine of them made it through the primaries, six of whom, according to Arnold, were favored to win their races. Only two Blacks, however, actually did win Senate seats.

Gudger went on to talk about the attitude toward Blacks at the University. Most of the Black students' problems, he feels, are caused by a basic tenet of human nature — fear of the unknown. Since most University students are White and many have had little contact with Blacks, Gudger feels that Whites here tend to misunderstand Blacks simply because of a lack of knowledge. To that end, said Gudger, "We've got to branch out."

Black Student Union meetings will be held every Monday from 7 to 9 p.m. in the EMU. All Black students are welcome to attend and take part. The room will be posted.

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