



Tuesday, February 11, 2003

ABS regains presence through teamwork

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

To further its purpose as a political, social and academic support system for minority students on campus, Oakland University's Association of Black Students (ABS) is looking back to its past.

"We are called the umbrella organization for African-American student organizations on campus," said senior journalism major Ashli Bobo, who became ABS president in April 2002. "We're trying to improve our communications with those organizations and do collaborative programming. This really isn't a new vision. The ABS was founded in the late 1960's based on that principle. Now we're trying to bring that back."

Regaining a presence as an umbrella organization means boosting ABS participation and membership, which Bobo said has waned over the past three years.

"I think our biggest achievement so far has been gaining more members," said Bobo, who also was a 2002 Keeper of the Dream Scholarship recipient. "Everyone on our executive board was new this year. We were members last year, but it's totally different when you're on the board because you have to learn how to run the organization.

"We wanted to gain back student membership and participation, so we decided to hand out materials during freshmen orientation. Last year, membership started high but it dropped off. We want our members to keep coming back and participating. We now have 80 financial (dues paying) members, and have more people coming out to support ABS events. Depending on the activity, we sometimes have up to about 150 participants. I'd have to say we're one of, if not the biggest, student organizations on campus."

Student organizations that the ABS regularly meets with to coordinate activities and plan events include fraternities and sororities in the National Pan-Hellenic Council, Lighthouse Campus Ministries, Akanke African Dance Troupe, Intrigue Hip Hop Dance Team, the Multicultural Business Students Alliance, National Society of Black Engineers and the NAACP.

"We have monthly general body meetings that are open to everyone so we can become informed about what's going on in the different organizations," Bobo said. "We're working on coordinating an activity fair for the spring so students can learn more about all of our different organizations. We're also going to have a ball sometime in April off campus to raise funds for minority scholarships."

The ABS had a member of its executive board sit on the committee that organized **African-American Celebration Month** events. The ABS sponsored three of those events: a third annual fashion show, dubbed "Stylin' in the Island," a musical presentation called "The Souls of Black Folk," and the annual **Martin Luther King Jr. Campus March and Birthday Celebration**. The ABS also collaborated with the **OU Golden Key International Honour Society** and other student organizations to make about 1,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to distribute to nine local homeless shelters.

"The fashion show also was a fund-raiser that we'll combine with our ball funds for scholarships," Bobo said. "This year's was very successful, though we don't know how much we've raised yet. Last year we raised about 700 or 800 dollars."

Another ABS initiative is to launch an organization Web site, which already is development. Bobo said the site might be launched before the end of the semester.

"Our goal, through the Web site and our other initiatives, is to uphold the umbrella principle and make sure we're on the same page with all the other student organizations as far as collaborative programming," Bobo said. "We want to make sure we provide a good support system not just for minority students but all students and student organizations as well."

For more information on ABS events, visit the **Center for Student Activities**, 49 Oakland Center, (248) 370-2400, or contact Bobo at (248) 364-9371 or acboboo@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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