

Robyn Lockett

Black Student Union makes their mark

Honoring the past to pave the way for the future, the Black Student Union of University of Wisconsin-Whitewater celebrated 40 years on a predominately white campus this year.

BSU has been able to face the barrier of racial segregation in the face. The keynote speaker was, Arline Hardy-Smith who was the first African American to graduate from UW-W, paving the way for black leaders on campus today.

“We wanted to show our newer members that they have a greater purpose in life,” BSU advisor and former president Andre Douglas said. “To hear about the struggles of blacks and how African Americans were still willing to make an organization that they could call their own, made it possible for us to have come this far.”

The Black Student Union evolved from its established name of Afro-American Organization, started by Hardy-Smith in 1968 when the university was known as Wisconsin State University. The organization was started in order to promote academic success, cultural development and poster harmony and equality in the UW-W community.

“When you think back to the time period in which [BSU] began, you can see the roots are still strong,” 2006 President Sherick Daniels, III said. “The state of the university at the time should shows members that we stand on the shoulder of giants.”

While the Civil Rights Movement was a significant turnaround for African American’s, students like Hardy-Smith make a footprint in history. To create programs geared to the advancement of blacks, Hardy-Smith made it possible for black students to take charge of their education. She gave hope that

blacks do not have to limit their achievements to the color of their skin and provide a stepping stone for blacks to achieve their own success.

“The legacy means all the tools of networking, success and the bond that BSU shares amongst its members,” Public Relations Director Brandon Hadnot said.

While viewing the tribute to African American success on campus, many people were emotional. Tears or both joy and pain flooded the room as the history of where the organization came from until where they are today flashed on the screen.

“Looking through the past history, I am proud to say I’m responsible for helping creating this event,” Hadnot said. “I am passionate about BSU because stepping into the place of leadership, I was encouraged by other members and it felt good to be believed in.”

Douglas and Daniels both expressed that fact that people like to have that sense of a home away from home. BSU is like a family and everyone wants to be welcomed by a group of people that look just like them, both said.

The experiences from the 60’s should reflect how successful and determine BSU is to achieve prominence. Greatness, constant learning, lessons learned, mistakes made and no failure has been the legacy of BSU according to Douglas and present day president Brittany Jackson.

“It is an honor to have our 40th celebration in the same year the 44th President of the United States is known to be black,” Douglas said.

Even though there have been events where blacks had to be the spokesperson for their people, members of BSU wouldn’t change the fact that they are on a predominately white campus.

“This has prepared me for the real world,” Daniels said. “Not everyone in the corporate world is going to be like me, act like me, nor talk like me.”

To be the only black in class has allowed for Daniels and other black students to educate whites on their culture. Daniels said that he was able to appreciate diversity and the traditions of his people.