

She's a catalyst for black student groups at Stanford

LIKE MOST predominantly white institutions, Stanford needs to be reminded of its interracial responsibilities. In part, that's the job of Faye Knox.

A Stanford graduate herself, Knox is director of the university's Black Community Services center. A tall, vibrant woman with a big smile, she is also assistant dean of student affairs and acting coordinator of the office of student activities.

The daughter of a Methodist minister, Knox grew up in East Palo Alto. "I live in East Palo Alto, grew up, went to high school in East Palo Alto, so this is home to me."

This past year there were 673 black students at Stanford, comprising 7.6 percent of the undergraduate population and 2.5 percent of the graduate students. In her director post, Knox acts as chief adviser to the more than 30 black student organizations on the campus.

"Black students are still in the minority on campus; they're certainly here in larger numbers than when I first came to Stanford, but with the university's emphasis on cultural diversity, there tends to be a sort of uni-directional approach to achieving that diversity," says Knox.

"There is support for black student interests. This center is one of those examples of support. But at the same time, when you get outside of the center and look at the academic area and look at other areas of student services, you find there is a need to assist black students in becoming more well-integrated into campus life."

Among the issues of special interest to black students this past year were the review of ethnic theme houses at Stanford and imposition of a new Western culture requirement.

Stanford currently has three ethnic theme houses: Ujamaa -- for black students; Zapata -- for Chicano students and Okada -- for Asian-American students. Native American students have a smaller program at Roble hall.

"THE university has not said it doesn't want ethnic theme houses," explains Knox. "But it is questioning their organizational structures and how the themes should be enacted in the houses."

"Black students are saying they need theme houses, not only to have a site where black culture can be the major focus, but also one where they can feel comfortable when they come home after class, where they can relax and feel a community-like environment."

"The university is proposing a more academic orientation for theme houses. There's also the ongoing question of whether theme house residents can be all black. That's something the university has very consistently opposed because of its philosophy on diversity. Yet now many (white) students end up in the theme houses without really wanted to be there."

As for the new Western culture requirement, Knox says it has been a "sore point" among many black students. "Their claim has been that there is an emphasis on Western European origins of culture with no reference at all to the cultures of the Third World."

STANFORD's black students are much more active now than they were when she was a student, says Knox. "In 1970, there was the black student union and that was the only student group. Now there are preprofessional and social groups, fraternities and sororities, the media, creative arts, gospel choir organizations and the black senior group, which puts on the annual black baccalaureate program."

"We also have this new phenomenon called United Black students, which the last two frosh classes have organized. Then we have the recruitment and orientation organizations which go after prospective freshmen ... That program has grown in quality over the last three years."

One accomplishment Knox is particularly proud of is the development of a network of black alumni, faculty and staff interested in student activities.

SIREN SOUNDS

Friends Nursery school reported a break-in the last weekend in July. The burglars ate cookies and milk -- then left.

Festival Cinema told police recently that someone has been stealing ginat letters from the theater's marquee out in front.

Three young men were arrested last week in connection with the theft of a plant from the Palo Alto Hyatt. The potted plant was taken from the hotel's bar.



FAYE KNOX, director of the Black Community Services center at Stanford.



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