As part of an initiative to evaluate and address the need for a women’s center at North Carolina Central University (NCCU), one of the assessment tools organized by Dr. Frances Graham, Associate Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs, was the Women’s Center Task Force, a multi-disciplinary committee charged with determining the level of interest in developing a women’s center on campus. As part of this effort, beginning in spring 2005, a research services firm (HERMES), in partnership with the Women’s Center Task Force and the Men’s Health Study, launched a web-based survey and conducted focus group meetings to collect and analyze data from students of color at NCCU. Based on findings gathered from these endeavors, as well as additional information sources and campus events, it was determined that the students, faculty, staff, departments, and administration would all greatly benefit from the addition of a university women’s center.

Eager to move forward, Dr. Graham established the Women’s Center Advisory Committee (WCAC) and she asked Dr. Carolyn Moore, the University’s Counseling Center Director, to serve as its chair. WCAC is comprised of a multi-disciplinary group of NCCU students and resident assistants, faculty, staff, and alumnae, as well as local community collaborators from the NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Carolina Women’s Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Committee consulted several sources of information, including the Women’s Student Programs and Services Standards and Guidelines developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education and collegiate women’s centers across the country. With meetings beginning in Fall 2005 and an early Winter retreat held in January 2006, the WCAC developed the following mission and vision of the proposed Women’s Center:

The mission of the NCCU Women's Center is to promote the academic, personal, and professional development and potential of women on campus by celebrating their strengths and aspirations; fostering a safe, respectful and equitable environment; and collaborating to mutually support the needs of the campus and community as an integrative whole.

The NCCU Women's Center envisions an empowering, inclusive, and just learning environment where women realize their limitless potential.

While the university women’s center would serve all members of the university community seeking support, information, and other resources, the primary target audience is an inclusive population of students, faculty, and staff at North Carolina Central University identified as female, ages 16 years and older. With a collaborative approach to the provision of services, the Women’s Center works with all departments on campus, alumni, and local community agencies to further advance the mission of the University.

NCCU hired its founding Women’s Center director, Ms. Chimi Boyd, in August 2007, and officially opened its doors on August 22, 2007. The Center is housed in the Student Services Building, Suite 120.

There are over 500 women’s centers nationwide, and four other women’s centers at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The NCCU Women’s Center, however, is the first one of its kind at a public HBCU. This fact makes NCCU a pioneer in public HBCU’s—true to its history.

The NCCU Women’s Center is the home to many exciting programs and activities. Ms. Chimi Boyd, with the help of outstanding student staff, organizes a campus Women’s Empowerment Week annually—a series of events and speakers that appeal to students, faculty and staff. She also has created a career development and leadership program for undergraduate women called Circle of Sisters and conducts relevant research on women’s topics, including violence against women.

Prepared by Ms. Chimi Boyd
Source: Women’s Center Records
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