

# Tab 1



# High Impact Project Proposal

For consideration by the Senate

Black Heritage Cultural Experience

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May 28th, 2025

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## Project Overview

The Black Heritage Cultural Experience (BHCE) represents a crucial investment in the intellectual, personal, and leadership development of UCSB students, especially those who identify with or seek to engage deeply with Black history and culture. This 10-day immersive journey through Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee offers undergraduates a transformative opportunity to explore the legacy and ongoing impact of Black communities in the U.S.

Over the course of the trip, students visit historical sites such as the Whitney Plantation and the National Civil Rights Museum. These spaces serve as intentional acts of remembrance, cultural reclamation, and political awareness. Each site is woven into a larger narrative that connects historical moments of resistance and oppression to the continued fight for Black liberation today.

In every state, students meet with local activists, artists, educators, and community leaders whose lived experiences and work embody the ongoing legacy of Black resistance, resilience, and care. These interactions offer students grounded models of leadership, healing, and transformative justice.

BHCE reinforces and expands the academic foundations of Black Studies and related coursework, transforming classroom learning into lived understanding. It cultivates critical thinking, cultural awareness, emotional grounding, and lifelong advocacy. Students return from this trip with a deeper sense of historical accountability and the tools to advocate for equity and justice within and beyond UCSB.

To address ongoing disparities in representation and access to cultural resources, we are requesting \$25,000 from the Associated Students to fund programming centered on the experiences of Black-identified students. Participation is guided by equity-based principles and is open to all students committed to supporting inclusive community-building. These funds will support critical travel costs, lodging, meals, and site-specific programming across the Southern United States.

## BHCE



Investing in BHCE is an investment in the future of UCSB—cultivating the next generation of Black leaders, scholars, and change-makers committed to justice, equity, and collective liberation. BHCE meets the criteria outlined for High Impact Projects under A.S. By-Laws Article IV, Section 3(N), as a time-bound, tangible, and transformative initiative rooted in educational equity.

## Team Background

The team facilitating this project is composed of dedicated members from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and the Associated Students Senate. This partnership brings together clinical expertise, cultural competency, and student leadership to ensure the continued success and intentionality of the Black Heritage Cultural Experience (BHCE).

- Dr. Meredith Merchant (CAPS)
- Dr. Dominique Broussard (CAPS)
- Dr. Brian Olowude (CAPS)
- Senate Liaison: [To be appointed by the First Pro-Tempore of the Senate upon approval of funding]

The CAPS team provides logistical coordination, emotional and mental health support, and culturally grounded mentorship throughout the trip. Their leadership ensures students are able to engage deeply with the emotional weight of the experience in a safe and reflective environment. The BHCE team is not requesting HIP Honoraria as part of this proposal. The Senators serve as liaisons between CAPS and Associated Students, helping to secure institutional backing, uplift student voices, and advocate for long-term funding and structural support. This collaborative team is united in its commitment to Black student wellness, empowerment, and experiential education.

## Project Mission

The Black Heritage Cultural Experience (BHCE) is an immersive learning initiative that deepens students' understanding of African American history while cultivating a lifelong commitment to racial justice, leadership, and cultural awareness. While the program centers the lived experiences and histories of Black-identified students, participation is guided by equity-based principles and is open to all students committed to inclusive and community-centered learning.

Through place-based education and intentional reflection, BHCE fosters both personal transformation and collective empowerment. The program is designed around three central goals:

### 1. Enhance Historical and Cultural Understanding

- Engage with key historical sites, museums, memorials, and communities across Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee
- Deepen understanding of pivotal periods in Black history, including antebellum slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the long Civil Rights Movement
- Center narratives of Black resistance, survival, and self-determination at every site visited

### 2. Foster Personal Reflection and Identity Development

- Create space for students to process the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual weight of the experience within a supportive cohort
- Encourage critical reflection on how personal and collective identities relate to Black historical struggle and resilience
- Build lasting bonds among students through shared storytelling,

healing, and affirmation

### 3. Cultivate Leadership and Advocacy for Racial Justice

- Learn from grassroots organizers, educators, artists, and cultural leaders whose work embodies legacy and liberation
- Equip students with community-rooted models of leadership and justice-driven organizing
- Empower participants to return to UCSB with renewed purpose and the tools to lead, advocate, and mobilize for structural change

Following the trip, students present their experiences at a public end-of-year reception attended by peers, faculty, staff, and community members. This event invites the campus into ongoing dialogue around racial justice, cultural memory, and shared responsibility, transforming the personal journey of each student into a collective call to action.



## Project Plan

The Black Heritage Cultural Experience (BHCE) is a multi-phase program designed to provide students with a comprehensive, community-based learning experience rooted in history, identity, and justice. Though the trip itself spans ten days across Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee, the preparation and post-trip reflection are equally integral to the program's impact. Each phase is scaffolded to ensure that students are academically prepared, emotionally supported, and meaningfully engaged throughout the experience.

### Pre-Trip Preparation

In the quarter leading up to the trip, participants engage in a series of weekly cohort meetings and facilitated discussions. These sessions provide essential historical, political, and cultural grounding for the journey ahead. CAPS staff and program coordinators collaborate with faculty from Black Studies, History, Education, Political Science, and Sociology to lead seminars on topics such as racial violence, resistance movements, cultural memory, and community healing.

These meetings also serve as an early site of community-building, offering students the space to process material together and connect their academic knowledge with the lived experiences they will soon encounter. Students are prepared not just intellectually, but emotionally and spiritually, to enter these spaces with critical awareness and cultural reverence.

### During the Trip

Students travel as a cohort across four states, visiting key historical sites such as museums, cultural institutions, Black churches, and memorials. Each location is intentionally selected to deepen understanding of Black resistance, community survival, and generational healing. Daily debriefs and guided reflections, led by CAPS staff, help students engage with the emotional and intellectual weight of the experience in real time.

In addition to site visits, students meet with local community leaders, artists, and educators, whose ongoing work links historical memory to current struggles for justice. These relationships create opportunities for learning that

are rooted in lived realities and community power.

### Post-Trip Engagement

Following the trip, students participate in activities designed to help them reflect, express, and share what they've experienced. These include writing, artistic expression, and public storytelling, culminating in an end-of-year campus reception. At this event, students present their insights to faculty, staff, peers, and community members—turning personal reflection into public education.

The reception serves as a moment of closure and as a collective call to action, inviting the UCSB community into a deeper conversation about race, remembrance, and responsibility.

BHCE is not simply a travel experience—it is a transformative educational model grounded in experiential learning, cultural immersion, and student empowerment. The program affirms the value of equity-driven, community-centered travel as a powerful site of student development, and serves as a blueprint for how UCSB can support underrepresented students in building knowledge, identity, and leadership. Upon funding approval, the Project Manager will initiate and submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in compliance with A.S. By-Laws Article IV, Section 3(N)(4)(b), to be signed by all team members, the A.S. Executive Director, the First and Second Pro-Temps, the Internal Vice President, and the A.S. President.

## Project Timeline

### Fall Quarter

- Recruitment and Application Process: Open application period for UCSB undergraduates
- Interviews and Cohort Selection: Selected students are interviewed and chosen to participate in the BHCE program
- Cohort Orientation: Accepted students attend a kick-off session to build community and begin logistical planning

### Winter Quarter

- Weekly Cohort Meetings Begin: Students participate in structured weekly meetings, led by CAPS and guest faculty from History, Black Studies, Political Science, and related fields
- Educational Preparation: Each session focuses on deepening student understanding of key historical contexts, figures, and movements that relate to sites on the itinerary
- Cultural Grounding and Reflection: CAPS staff support students in developing emotional tools for engaging with sites that carry deep ancestral and historical weight

### Spring Break (10-Day Trip)

Students travel together through Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee, visiting a curated list of historically significant sites, including:

- Louisiana: Congo Square, St. Augustine Catholic Church, Backstreet Cultural Museum, StudioBE, Preservation Hall, Whitney Plantation Museum, Swamp Tour
- Alabama: Mothers of Gynecology Park, Tuskegee University, Legacy Museum, National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Edmund Pettus

Bridge, Selma to Montgomery National  
Historic Trail

- Mississippi: Emmett Till Interpretive Center, Emmett Till River Memorial, Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial, Delta Blues Legend Tour
- Tennessee: I Am a Man Memorial, Ida B. Wells Memorial, National Civil Rights Museum, Medgar Evers Historic Site, Farrish Street Tour

### Spring Quarter

- Post-Trip Reflection and Creative Work: Students engage in writing, storytelling, and collaborative discussions to process the experience
- End-of-Year Reception: Students present personal reflections and insights to the broader UCSB community in a public event designed to educate, inspire, and honor the collective impact of the journey
- Assessment and Planning: Program coordinators debrief with CAPS and AS Senate to collect feedback, document outcomes, and begin early preparation for the next year

## Anticipated Issues

The Black Heritage Cultural Experience (BHCE) has successfully completed three consecutive cohorts with strong student outcomes and no major issues or disruptions. The program is supported by an experienced team from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

## Budget Outline

### Black Heritage Cultural Experience (BHCE)

**Requested Amount: \$25,000**

The Black Heritage Cultural Experience spans 10 days across four states—Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi—during Spring Break. Lodging support is being requested to accommodate 10 undergraduate students and 2 CAPS facilitators in hotels across each location.

Black Heritage Cultural Experience	
Item	Sum
Hotel Lodging (4 states)	\$25, 000
	Total: \$25,000

Location	Major Site or Activity
New Orleans, LA	Travel & Group Dinner
New Orleans, LA	St. Peter Claver Mass, Congo Square, StudioBE, Preservation Hall
New Orleans, LA	Whitney Plantation Tour, Swamp Tour
Mobile → Montgomery, AL	Africatown, Travel Day
Montgomery, AL	Mothers of Gynecology Park, Tuskegee Institute, Selma & Edmund Pettus
Montgomery → Birmingham	Legacy Museum, Peace & Justice Memorial, 16th Street Baptist Church
Memphis, TN	Slave Haven, I Am a Man Memorial, Civil Rights Museum (Lorraine Motel)
Ruleville → Jackson, MS	Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial, Emmett Till Sites, Delta Blues Tour

Jackson → New  
Orleans, LA

Medgar Evers Home, Farish Street, Return  
to NOLA

New Orleans, LA

Departure

## Attachments, Links, and References










**BECAUSE I'VE BEEN  
TO THE  
MOUNTAINTOP.**

And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain.

**April 3, 1968**



 Full Speech