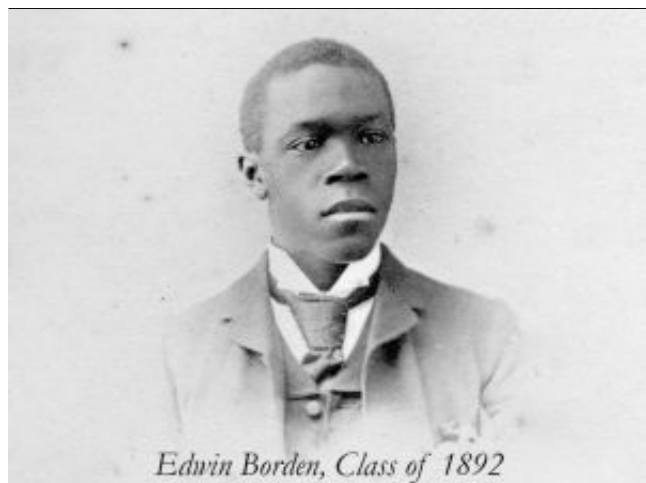


Acadia Recognizes African Heritage Month by Adding First Black Student Advisor Position to Student Services

2019-02-01 16:05



A plaque in the lobby of Acadia University's historic Convocation Hall, honours Rev. Dr. Edwin Howard Borden from Truro NS, who graduated from Acadia in 1892 with his Bachelor of Arts and his Master of Arts in 1896. He was the first person of African descent to graduate from Acadia and is believed to be one of the earliest persons of African descent to graduate from any college or university in Canada.

Acadia's alumni of African descent have turned exceptional student careers in athletics and academics into successful careers in every aspect of business, politics, public service, and spiritual leadership in almost every country on the planet for more than 125 years.

The role Acadia played in educating some of Nova Scotia's most influential civil rights leaders of the 20th Century is described in the large outdoor exhibit near University Hall that is dedicated to W.P. Oliver ('34) and forms part of the Mathieu DaCosta African Heritage Trail located in Southwestern Nova Scotia. And, for over 20 years Acadia has been a partner in hosting Kamp Kujichagulia, a camp designed to motivate Nova Scotian students of African descent to attend university and college through positive exposure to and participation in campus life. The camp is based on the second principle of Kwanzaa - Kujichagulia (self-determination), and each summer 30 students from grades 9-11 learn more about how post-secondary education can be an option for them, paving the way for a many "Camp Kuji" graduates to attend university or college.

"The time has come for us to make a deliberate investment in the success of our students of African descent so this year we will appoint our first Black Student Advisor to our student services team," said Dr. Peter Ricketts, Acadia's President and Vice Chancellor. "We began discussions with members of our [Black Students' Association](#) (BSA) last year about the need for this position and the time is right, as we launch African Heritage Month, to announce that we will expand our student services capacity to include this position. I believe that we need to increase our cultural competency on campus, provide better academic and community support to students of African descent, and strengthen our connection to external organizations and individuals, especially our alumni, with the resources that can help our students pursue

career opportunities.”

Acadia University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq People and in March 2018 Ricketts released a series of actions designed to address the recommendations of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission developed by the President's Advisory Council on Decolonization, one of which was the appointment of an advisor for Indigenous students. A further recommendation was to analyze the supports available to students of African descent. Given the important role people of African heritage have played in Nova Scotia's development and growth from its earliest days of existence as a province, it is Ricketts' goal to ensure Acadia maintains its reputation for preparing future leaders from the Black community by drawing on the University's history and depth of easily accessible role models with an Acadia connection.

One of the most important responsibilities of the new Black Student Advisor will be to lead the Black Students Working Group — also a recommendation of the BSA — to identify specific challenges faced by students of African descent on campus, create information portals they can easily access, and build academic career-path plans for success. In addition, the advisor will be key point of contact for external organizations in the African Nova Scotian and broader African descent communities within Nova Scotia and beyond, support Acadia's student recruitment efforts, and work with stakeholders to facilitate intercultural and inclusive events that promote diversity on campus.

“Recognizing the needs of students of African descent as distinct from the needs of other students is a well-established practice in post-secondary education and we are, frankly, behind the curve,” said Ricketts. “Acadia's history in attracting students of African descent from here in Nova Scotia as well as from nations around the world provides us with the imperative to do a better job of not only supporting students of African heritage, but promoting and celebrating their achievements internally and externally. We also need to find the means to make our campus more diverse and to attract faculty and staff who reflect our community at large. It is a big task, but it won't be completed if we don't take concrete action right now.”

Acadia's Black Students' Association has a number of events planned throughout African Heritage Month and a list of them can be [found here](#). On February 9th in War Memorial Gymnasium between the men's and women's basketball games, Acadia and the Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association will hold their 10th annual event honouring Acadia's past and present student-athletes of African descent.

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