

Western Carolina University Hosts Black History Month Events in Collaboration with Global Black Studies Program

By Avery Luft

After the wintery chill of early February, Western Carolina University celebrates Black History Month by hosting several featured events with the support of the Global Black Studies program. Dr. Frederick Douglas Dixon, the newly appointed director of the Global Black Studies program, is highly motivated in creating an educational space that allows for the growth of his undergraduate students into successful graduate candidates.

“We want to train our students for practical understanding in higher Ed. We want to train them as undergraduates to become familiar and engage with the baseline of the rigor of graduate study,” Dr. Dixon says.

One of the ways that the GBS program is fostering student engagement this year is by hosting the first inaugural undergraduate student research conference. In this space, students in the GBS minor were allowed to present their research that they have been working on since the fall 2025 semester. On Thursday, February 5th, 7 students presented their research to a room with an interested audience, practicing not only their crowd engagement and presentation skills, but their graduate school rigor relations, adjusting to the experience of what Dr. Dixon names as, “the understandings that come from this transformation after you present it [research], because you see things differently.”

This is not the only research conference the Global Black Studies students have access and exposure to. The program plans to take at least 6 students to the CACE conference at the University of North Carolina Greensboro on February 24th-26th. This conference showcases several keynote speakers, including Dr. Tracy Bailey, Dr. Deborah Barnes, and WCU’s very own Dr. Frederick Douglas Dixon.



These opportunities for research presentation are especially important for Dr. Dixon as he thinks about what he hopes the program can offer the students, and about what they can teach them moving forward in the current society. “We want to make sure that our students know that they have what we call “social responsibility.” And that social responsibility as activist scholars means that their job is to challenge the mainstream narrative. And in that challenge of the mainstream narrative, they need to research the research,” Dr. Dixon states.

The Global Black Studies program holds significant impact throughout Western Carolina University. The events hosted in February could not have been done without support from the Anthropology and Sociology Departments, the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the support from the Black Student Union, a registered student organization through WCU.

The events listed are open to the public, completely free, and meant to educate, inform, and “connect generations,” as Dr. Dixon states.

All events are hosted in Apodaca Science Building, Room 123, beginning at 2pm.

Feb 10th: “The Mis-Education” of 2026: Modern Erasure and Woodson’s Warning

Dr. Alicia Fontnette, Director of the National Council for Black Studies and Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Delaware

Feb 17th: “When the Witness Becomes the Record: on “Bombingham,” and the record of racial terror in Birmingham Alabama”

Mr. Dale Long, Survivor of the 1963 16th Street Church Bombing, Birmingham, Alabama

Feb 19th: “Commemoration or Confrontation? Interrogating if Black History Month Needs a Makeover”