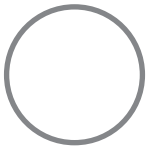
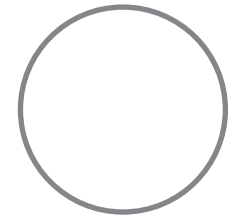


**African-American  
Cultural Center**



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2019**  
**2020**





ABOUT THE AACC  
MISSION AND VISION

AACC STAFF

DIRECTOR REFLECTION

WHOLISTIC WELLNESS

WHOLISTIC WELLNESS PROGRAMMING

A YEAR OF EXHIBITS

TRAVELING EXHIBITS

CAMPUS COLLABORATIONS

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

A RESPONSE TO COVID-19

OUR VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

# TABLES OF CONTENTS

APPENDIX: STATISTICS

## ABOUT THE AACC



One of 7 **Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change**, the African-American Cultural Center is an interdisciplinary unit housed in Academic Affairs under the reporting line of the **Office of Diversity** and the Provost. The Center curates, produces and sponsors exhibitions, performances, films and film screenings, open mic poetry gatherings, lecture demonstrations, dance, storytelling, visual and performing arts workshops and projects. We also coordinate high school and college internships, student and postdoctoral research, and lend our expertise to a number of programs and initiatives. The gallery and library spaces are also available for quiet study, working groups, meetings and presentations.

## AACC Library, Gallery and Other Resources

The AACC Library, located in room 200 Addams Hall, has wireless access, two pc workstations, a flat screen television, a book collection and resources for research on African-American and Diaspora topics for dissertations, theses, term papers, and projects. Members of the UIC community can check out books and other materials from our collection at no cost. The Library and Gallery (room 207) are also available for open study. They can be reserved by registered student organizations, campus units and community partners at no cost.



To reserve either space, complete a Space Request Form on our website: <http://aacc.uic.edu>.

## VISION STATEMENT

We envision the Center as a safe, brave and inclusive hub for collaboration, creative and scholarly practice, engaged learning, service and social justice.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the African-American Cultural Center at UIC is to support the academic and diversity missions of the University by engaging UIC students, faculty, staff, community partners and other stakeholders in programs and initiatives that contextualize, highlight, present, and critically examine Black diaspora traditions, histories and experiences.



**KATE BASS**  
Graduate Assistant



**JORDYN HESTER**  
Student Marketing Assistant



**SANDRA MUNOZ**  
Program Assistant



**DAKOTA BURNETT**  
Student Marketing Assistant



**JASMINE HOFFENER**  
Student Marketing Assistant



**BRENDA PINKETT-LITTLE**  
Program Director



**ENIA GREGORY**  
Student Office Aide



**KILAH MCCLINE**  
Student Graphic Designer

### 2019 AACC BOARD MEMBERS

**ENIA GREGORY**  
**NICOLETTE METOYER**  
**KILAH MCCLINE**  
**AMANDA MCDONALD**  
**TYRA PATTERSON**



# DIRECTOR REFLECTION



## DR. CYNTHIA BLAIR Director

During the 2019-2020 academic year, the African Cultural Center continued the work of building a brave and welcoming space that invites the UIC community and the community beyond to creatively explore issues related to blacks in Chicago, the US, and around the world.

Among the year's highlights has been the expansion of our Black Table Talk Series, our Wellness Initiative, and our exhibit, "Remembering Toni Morrison: She Did Language." Through this wide variety of programs and initiatives the AACC has brought students together for meaningful dialogue, fostered necessary conversations about Black mental health, and celebrated the life and work of one of America's most consequential 20th Century writers. Through these and other programs, we have fostered the critical and collaborative examination of the traditions, histories, cultural expressions, and experiences of our diverse community.

Toward the end of the year, we have had to shift in response to both the global health crisis caused by COVID-19, and the calls for racial justice in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd. Envisioning social justice is at the heart of our mission, and this year's global activism for racial justice has become a beacon further highlighting the critical work of the Center and pointing to new directions for future initiatives. The last few months of this academic year have been filled with disruptions, political as well in the day-to-day lives of our families and communities. Due to COVID restrictions, we have not been able to be together on campus, and thus have had to re-imagine what it means to fulfill one of the Center's core values – community-building. We quickly, if at first clumsily, began the pivot to online programming. In the process we have learned much about our collective resilience, and our profound need for connection and meaning-making. In looking to the next year, we plan to take the lessons we have learned – both in the months of vibrant programming and student engagement, and in the days after COVID closed our physical doors – to expand the ways we build a thriving community of students, faculty, and staff joyfully engaged in the cultural exploration of black life and committed to the ongoing fight for racial justice. We can't wait!

# WHOLISTIC WELLNESS

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare."  
--Audre Lorde

The word "wellness" is everywhere! It is most often attached to specific sets of practices such as meditation and yoga, and often to specific groups of people, most often economically privileged white men and women. Yet wellness should not be reduced to the products it sells or the habits of self-care promoted in popular representations of trendy wellness practices. According to the National Wellness Institute, wellness is "an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence." In the spirit of Audre Lorde, this year, the African American Cultural Center has explored wellness as a profound act of self- and community-care. Through free mid-day yoga classes, opportunities to use the gallery space for quiet decompressing between classes, and workshops through the Wellness Center, the AACC has invited our community to come together in the spirit of mutual support with the goal of creating habits of self-care that can sustain us during times of stress, and that can nurture individual and collective health.

# WHOLISTIC WELLNESS PROGRAMMING

## BLACK TABLE TALK

We discuss thought-provoking topics and film shorts related to today's climate reflecting political, economical, and social justice events.



## OPEN MIC

We listen to talented artists speak their peace. Featured artists announced monthly and walk-in poets welcome too!

## FILM SCREENINGS

We explored films that depict black characters and relevant topics that reflect black culture, traditions, and social justice.



## WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

Through a series of conversations, lectures, yoga and meditation classes together we navigate a path to wellness.

## LUNCHTIME READING ROOM

Each session we discuss short and thought-provoking selections by black poets and authors. Discussions are facilitated by African American Studies faculty with lunch provided.

## FINALS BREAKFAST

As a de-stressor during finals week, the AACC invites you to a soul food breakfast in the mornings and snacks throughout the day.



# A YEAR OF EXHIBITS

This year the AACC exhibits placed emphasis on the nature and origin of storytelling through various media. These exhibits are an intuitive, visual, and vivid way of communication. The exhibits we chose to present this year provide attendees with an opportunity to learn about storytelling through images.

The quilting exhibit lets the attendee experience the art of storytelling through quilting as a practice that dates back to the days of the slave trade in America and has been a source of conveying information that could not be formally written.

The AACC also paid contribute to the Pulitzer Prize awardee in literature Toni Morrison by bringing awareness and recognition to her various writings. The two exhibits Quilting and Toni Morrison shows attendees to the exhibit how communication through storyteling how come full circle. Our exhibit entitled Converege gives the modern takes on communicating through imaging. Visitors will leave these exhibits with a dimensional experience of communication that invites them to explore their own creativity.



## Converge

Curated by T'yanna Moore, BDE's Graphic Design, 2019  
May 22nd - August 23, 2019 / AACC Library

Converge explores the duality that is identity; what is concealed and what is exposed. Using obnubilated imagery, the portraits are reduced to silhouettes, highlighting how the nuances of body language portray demeanor with all the same with all the same intents and purposes as facial expression. As a designer and photographer, Moore probes for points of convergence amid the multifaceted features and attitudes that comprise the human form and distinguish us, one from the other.

## Remembering Toni Morrison: She Did Language

Curated by AACC Director and Staff 2020  
January 23rd, 2020 - May 9th, 2020 / AACC Library

An exhibit celebrating the life, literature, and legacy of novelist and essayist Toni Morrison. Highlighting her numerous awards, writing collection, and lifetime achievements.

## Quilting: Telling Our Stories Through Patterns & Purpose

Curated by Needles and Threads Quilters Guild of Chicago  
January 23rd, 2020 - May 9th, 2020 / AACC Gallery

This exhibit explores African American quilting as an artform through which generations of black women have crafted a language of community and kinship, resistance and freedom, creativity and joy, individuality and sisterhood.



# TRAVELING EXHIBITS

The AACC traveling exhibits are a way to bring learning tools and resources to our campus and community. Toolkits are designed to enhance the learning experience of attendees and complement the curriculum of various learning institutions from college level as well as K-12th grade. These exhibits can be used in a business and professional setting as a supplemental tool for sensitivity training that evokes conversation and a broader understanding of ethnic issues. The exhibits use a variety of media and means to create an atmosphere conducive to learning, exploring, and creating.

The traveling exhibits are designed for easy transport and installation in museums, libraries, community centers, and other traditional and nontraditional environments. They are also the perfect way to add a meaningful component to your next special event. The AACC traveling exhibits bring the story beyond the walls of our gallery making it more accessible to the community! Please visit our website for more information.



## Calvacade of the American Negro

Curated by Jacqueline Smith, MA graduate in Museum and Exhibition Studies, former AACC Graduate Assistant, 2015

"The American Negro Exhibition," uses objects, images and historical narrative to explore the legacy of the Chicago's 1940 American Negro Exposition. The 1940 Exposition, hosted by the historic Chicago Coliseum, marked 75 years of African-American freedom from slavery, and publicly presented the accomplishments of Black Americans to public audiences.

## A Choreography of Contagion

Absence and Presence of Black Bodies in Visual Culture

Curated by Dr. Mario LaMothe, former Postdoc at AACC

Contagion explores how people of African descent have been represented in public health campaigns. The traveling exhibit features a collage of early 20th century newspaper prints and images from private institutions, health journals and popular media alongside modern health campaigns involving global epidemics from cholera to Ebola and HIV/AIDS to malaria.

## Remembering Toni Morrison: She Did Language

Curated by AACC Director and Staff 2020

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# CAMPUS COLLABORATIONS

**COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF TONI MORRISON:**  
 Through Exhibition, Film And Readings.  
 With the following partners:  
 African American Studies,  
 Daley Library, English Department, and Women's Leadership Resource Center.

## African American Studies

Faculty from African American Studies facilitated AACC Black Table Talk, and a Lecture Series entitled "Liberation in a Police State".

## CCUSC Heritage Garden

Heritage Garden Student interns and AACC staff connected horticulture with environmental sustainability, cultural diversity, and social justice issues through hands-on activities and discussions.

## Latino Cultural Center

The AACC and the Latino Cultural Center presented a film screening of "La Negrada", which explores the lack of representation and social norms which contribute to the discrimination of Mexico's Afro-descendant population

## Office of Diversity

The AACC participated in the following events hosted by the OOD: STRIDE, Office of Diversity Recognition Ceremony

## TRIO

AACC hosted interns affiliated with the TRIO **Upward Bound Program** which educates students to use critical thinking, effective expression and a positive attitude to negotiate the pursuit of higher education and a satisfying future.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

These partnerships represent a bridge between the campus and the city keeping UIC AACC an integral part of community relations.

## Legal Aid Chicago

Legal Aid Chicago provides free civil legal services to people living in poverty in Cook County. External relations at Legal Aid Chicago hosted a Black History month lecture for its' staff attorneys, legal and administrative support employees in which the AACC Director Cynthia Blair was a guest panelist.

## Needles and Threads Quilters Guild of Chicago

Needles and Threads Quilters Guild of Chicago (NTQGC) co-curated the AACC exhibit "Quilting: Telling Our Stories Through Patterns and Purpose". The NTQGC promotes the love of quilting, the opportunity to learn new techniques, growth and development in the art and craft of quilting, and support the community by providing service to Illinois charitable non-profit organizations.

## Toastmasters

Toastmasters International is a world leader in communication and leadership development. Toastmasters meet twice a month in the AACC Library in a supportive environment. Participants learn to tell their stories, listen and answer, plan and lead, give feedback—and accept it. Through our community of learners, they find their path to leadership.



# STUDENT REFLECTIONS



**KATE BASS**  
MA IN MUSEUM AND EXHIBITIONS STUDY

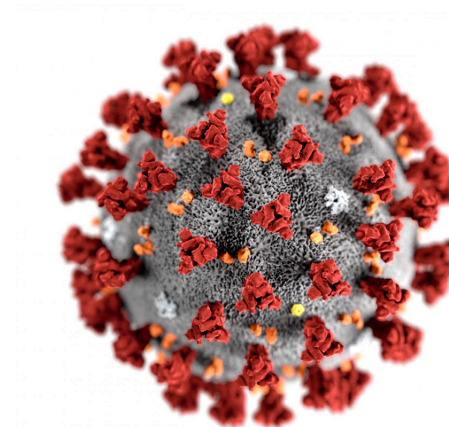
My first favorite memory was the finals breakfast we had last year. Even though it was early in the morning, (at least to me), the gallery was full of students. Despite it being finals week, the atmosphere was lively. The food was pretty good, too. My second favorite memory was the opening of the quilting exhibit. It felt kind of chaotic finishing the labels for the exhibit and then the boards for Toni Morrison – but it was fun and felt rewarding to have people visit the exhibit and compliment it.



**TYRA PATTERSON**  
BA IN COMMUNICATION

My major is Communication and my favorite memory at AACC is just coming to hang out with all the staff on a random evening and making jokes with one another. Another fun memory is when we all went to see the musical and rode in Ms. Brenda's car.

# RESPONSE TO COVID-19



Due to the global pandemic caused by the 2019 Coronavirus Infection Disease (COVID-19) outbreak, beginning Monday, March 16 the African American Cultural Center closed its physical office. Although we suspended all public in person programs, tours, and space requests we continued to create spaces for online engagement and community.

We encourage everyone to stay safe and healthy.

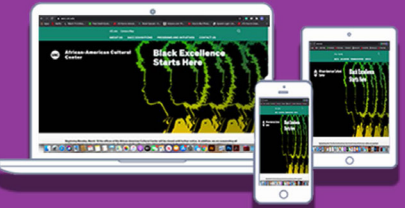
UIC AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

## WE ARE OPEN!

**OFFICE HOURS  
MONDAY-THURSDAY  
10:00AM-12:00PM**

Staff available virtually for **DROP-IN** or by **APPOINTMENT** for **QUESTIONS** and **DISCUSSION**

### OPEN STUDY HOURS

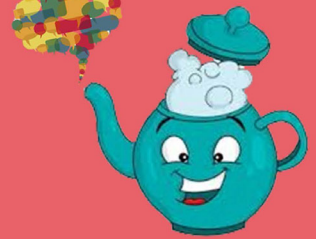


Don't study alone! Drop in for our virtual open study sessions. Get motivated and increase your productivity.

**Monday-Thursday  
1:00pm-3:00pm**

@aacultur @uicacc

### CHILL AND SPILL



Need to de-stress? Bring a friend and hang out with fellow students.

**Every Friday  
10:00am-12:00pm**

To participate visit the website for Zoom link information (aacc.uic.edu)

# OUR VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

The African American Cultural Center launched a weekly series of virtual programs designed to keep us connected and focused on the positive.

Everyday we explored a theme designed to support us throughout the week, offering a creative space for sharing, strengthening community, and staying healthy.

Participants followed us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

## MINDFUL MONDAYS

Set yourself up for the week with thoughtful quotations and videos that promote wellness and self-care.

## TRY-IT TUESDAYS

Recommend recipes and activities that have made you happy throughout the week.



## WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS

Share the many ways we can take care of ourselves and each other throughout the week.

## THRIVING THURSDAYS

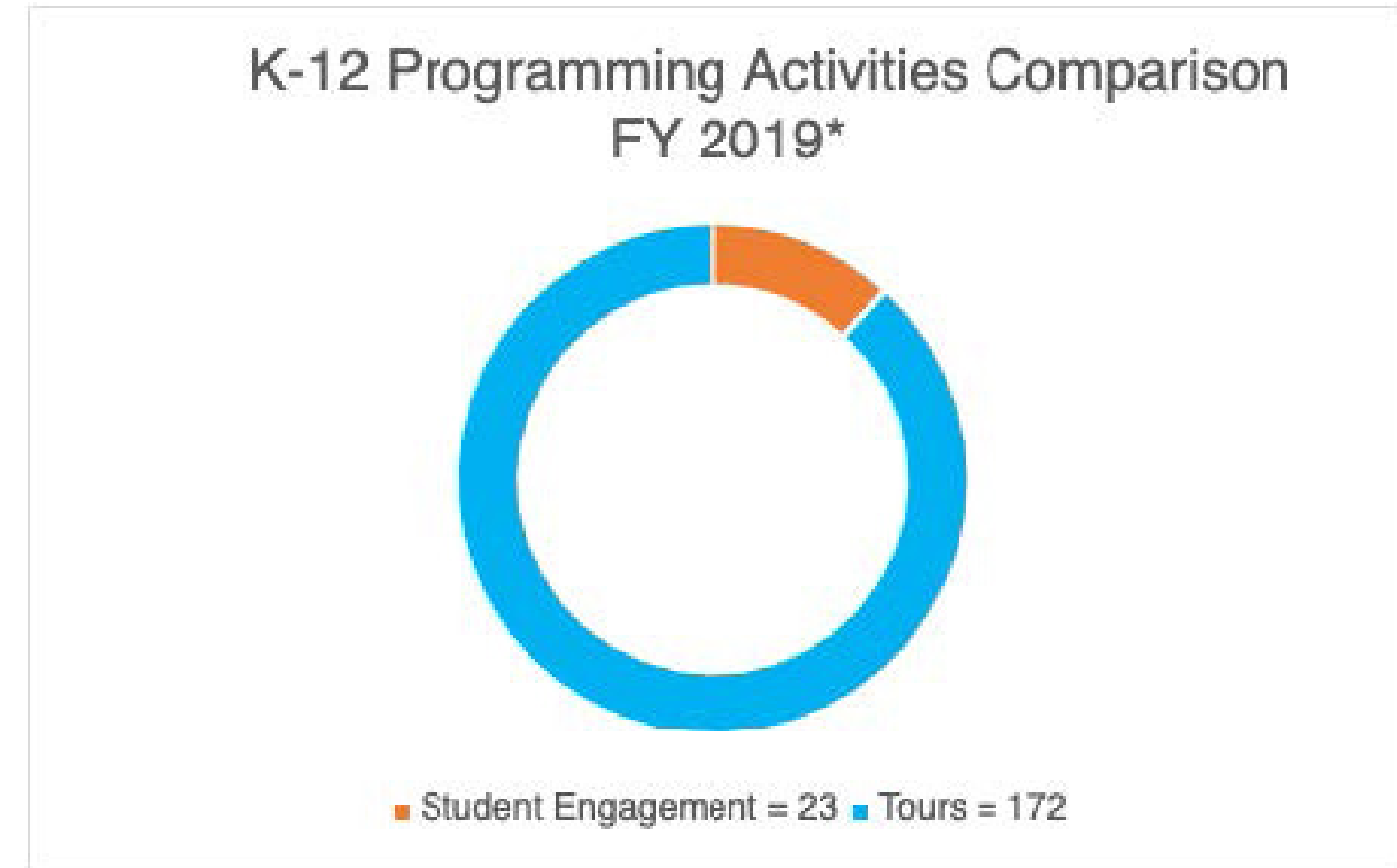
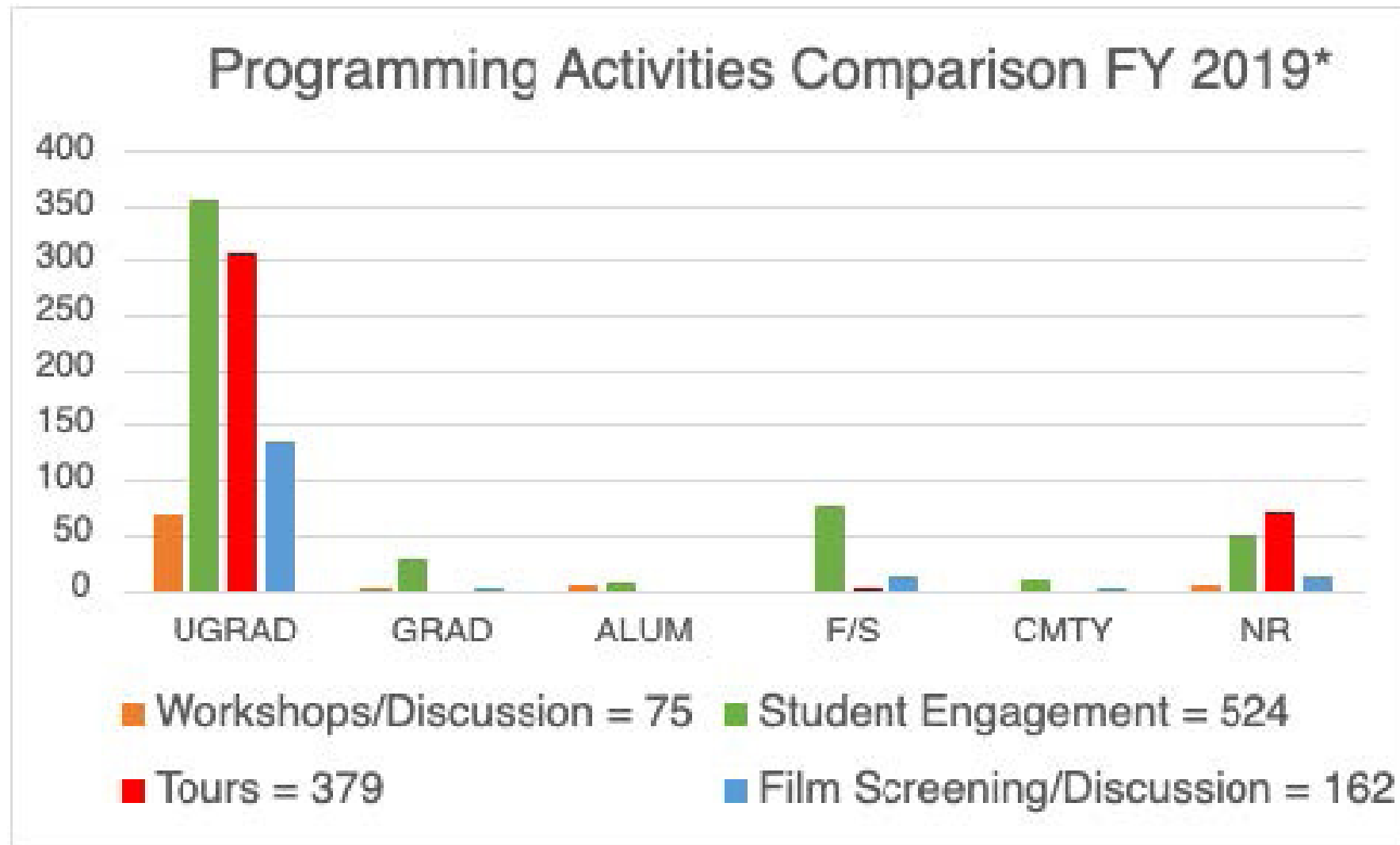
Showcasing black businesses and entrepreneurs in the Chicagoland area and the nation.

## FILM FRIDAYS

Suggest videos, short films, readings and activities for weekend relaxation.



# APPENDIX: AACC USE STATISTICS





## Support the Center

If you wish to make a donation visit [give.uic.edu](https://give.uic.edu) and type **African-American Cultural Center** in the search field. Please contact us at [uicaacc@uic.edu](mailto:uicaacc@uic.edu) or 312-996-9549.



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