

Week-long celebration at CCSU focuses on diversity

By MICHAEL ANSARRA

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Within the last two years, the Central Connecticut State University campus has seen two major events leading to racial tension. As an African-American administrator who has been a part of this campus for over 20 years, I thought about what our department could do to change the culture of our campus.

The Harmony Classic, a football game between Central and an historically black university, was first conceived about eight months ago, and since that time it has taken on a life of its own. As an athletics department we needed to do our part to build racial harmony on our campus and in our community, and that is what this event is all about.

Central Connecticut will host North Carolina State University at Willow Brook Park on Sept. 20. This will be more than just a football game. It will be the culmination of a week-long campus celebration of education and diversity, and the first of its kind in the area. By inviting a historically black university and its nationally recognized marching band to New Britain, we will focus our efforts on building racial harmony in our community. We have partnered with the Connecticut State Conference of the NAACP to host this event in conjunction with the celebration of its 100th anniversary.

I knew as this began to develop that it would need to be about more than a football game. As I contacted several historically black universities about our idea, we began to have some more thoughts about what this day could become. As a result of several conversations, the NCSU Marching Sound Machine will perform both at halftime and following the game, which is scheduled to kick-off at 1 p.m. at Veterans Stadium in New Britain. The post-game celebration will also feature the CCSU Marching Band.

Now the day had become more than just a game, but we knew we could do still more. So we have involved the entire university campus in this celebration. Our campus classrooms will be filled with talks of diversity and racial harmony during the week heading into the game. Our concept has been embraced by our university community, and with the addition of the NAACP as our title sponsor for the event, it has reached far and wide throughout the state.

What began as a simple idea to improve the culture of our campus has grown into an event we hope will help us improve the quality of the culture in the larger community of the state. On campus, we will continue to educate ourselves on the issues of diversity and racial harmony well after this event is over. Community involvement in this event is important, and we hope you will join our celebration and come see a great game and a great marching band.

Tickets to the game are \$12 and can be purchased by calling the CCSU athletics ticket office at (860) 832-BLUE. Groups of 50 or more can purchase tickets for \$10 each. All seats to the game will be general admission.

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