

## BSU wins top Big 12 honor for 3rd time in 4 years

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Carmen Ellis sat nervously in a crowd of more than 1,000 people. Butterflies swirled in her stomach as she clutched her friend's hand amidst the packed room in Lawrence. The culmination of a year's worth of hard work all came down to this moment.

And then she heard it — an announcer booming, "Kansas State University" — and with that, she and 20 other K-State Black Student Union members felt a wave of excitement and relief as the K-State BSU was named the Most Outstanding Black Student Government among all Big 12 schools for the third time in four years.

Ellis, senior in elementary education and K-State BSU president, represented K-State along with her fellow BSU members at the 32nd annual Big 12 Conference on Black Student Government last month.

The conference is a time for black student governments from across the Big 12 to come together to improve and honor those organizations that strive to promote leadership and fellowship among multiculturalism on campus, she said.

This year, the conference took place at the University of Kansas, and the K-State BSU took home the top prize - the Clarence Wine Most Outstanding Council of the Year Award.

"It was nerve-racking," Ellis said. "When we won, it was such a relief. Everybody came and congratulated us, and it just felt really good to win for the third time."

K-State received the top honor at last year's conference as well as the 2006 conference.

"It was exciting and kind of unbelievable," said Kristin Wilkes, senior in sociology and BSU delegate. "We do a lot of hard work throughout the year. It was definitely stressful at times, and there were tensions at the end, but as a team, we all pulled together and brought home the trophy for the third year ... it was a great feeling."

To get ready for the conference, Ellis said each participating organization constructed a book documenting the members' promotion and support of multiculturalism throughout the year. The K-State book included fliers from BSU events and fundraisers, letters from university officials, including President Jon Wefald, and numerous student profiles in its 110 pages.

Ellis said the K-State BSU also performed a skit at the conference parodying a newscast while depicting the organization's retention and volunteer activities.

The participating schools' presentations were judged along with their books by a panel to deem which Big 12 black student government had been most successful throughout the year.

As the Most Outstanding Council, the K-State BSU received a trophy and a \$1,000 scholarship package to further the organization.

"Everyone really had a lot of school pride and spirit," said Careem Gladney, senior in finance and K-State BSU member. "We really wanted to make sure that we not only went [to the conference], but we were prepared and succeeded in the competition."

Gladney, who has been involved in numerous leadership positions in many different organizations at K-State, also took home an individual award. He was named the Most Outstanding Senior in Big 12 black student government organizations.



Chelsy Lueth

Chelsy Lueth | Collegian Bryon Williams, 2007-08 Black Student Union president; Carmen Ellis, current BSU president; and Josh Criswell, 2005-06 BSU president; showcase the awards naming K-State's BSU as the Most Outstanding Black Student Government among all Big 12 schools.

"It was definitely a surprise," he said of winning the award. "Realizing that it was open to the other 11 schools in the Big 12 and realizing there were so many outstanding individuals, I was really proud to receive [an individual award] for K-State."

As for the future of the K-State BSU, Ellis, Gladney and Wilkes all agree that the group will only get better.

"I think our biggest [challenge] is getting more students to be a part of the BSU — all students on campus, not just black and minority students," Wilkes said. "But I think the future of BSU is only going to get stronger."

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