UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

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'Educate and Celebrate'

With a theme of “Planting the Seeds of Our Future, Defining the Next Steps,” UC Santa Barbara will host college students from around the state during the 12th Annual Afrikan Black Coalition (ABC) Conference Feb. 12-15.

Bringing together delegates from the University of California and California State University systems, the student-driven event is held each year during Black History Month. The conference aims to unite Black students in California, provide cultural and political education, increase Black academic recruitment, enhance social and academic retention and encourage community collaboration.

Founded by UC students in 2003 to preserve the cultural traditions and political fervor of diasporic Africans within the student population, ABC now connects the Black Student Unions of UC, CSU and California community college campuses.

“It is very exciting to be welcoming to UC Santa Barbara over 600 college and university students from across California to participate in the 12th annual Afrikan Black Coalition conference,” said Katya Armistead, the dean of student life at UCSB and the coalition’s primary adviser on campus. “The UCSB ABC committee has been working tirelessly to create an experience to remember by focusing on a program that builds community, educates and celebrates the contributions of Black leaders.”

“It is an honor to be part of ABC,” said Gold Okafor, a third-year UCSB student majoring in biopsychology and chair of the 2016 conference committee. “The conference comes at an exciting time for the coalition to celebrate its

accomplishments and continue to plan for the future.

“I want the delegates of this conference to leave with passion and empowerment for their future and the generations to come,” added Okafor, who noted the event this year is focused on “improving the success of Black people in the professional world.”

Scheduled speakers for the three-day gathering include:

• Umi Selah, co-founder of the activism organization group Dream Defenders, who has been recognized by EBONY magazine and The Root as one of the 100 most influential African Americans in the nation

• Chuck D, best known as the leader and co-founder of the legendary rap group Public Enemy, and an influential voice of insight on music, technology, politics and race in America

• Melinda Abdullah, noted leader in advanced ethnic studies, as well as a professor and chair of Pan-African Studies at CSU Los Angeles, and current member of the #BlackLivesMatter leadership team

• David Banner, a Grammy Award-winning music producer, recording artist, philanthropist, activist and actor, and a prominent voice on social injustice, appearing on CNN and BET, among other places

• Bree Newsome, award-winning filmmaker and social justice activist, who made headlines in 2015 for scaling up the South Carolina capitol building to remove the confederate flag

The robust agenda also includes professional workshops, a career fair and panel, a business proposal competition and a Black Grad Slam for black graduate students to present their research. The conference will conclude with a ceremony to officially unveil the historical photography display at North Hall, where black students in 1968 staged a peaceful takeover to demand action to increase enrollment and retention of Black students — an event resulting in the establishment of UCSB’s Black Studies Department.

More information about the conference can be found via the UCSB-ABC committee website.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.