



JLAAavPr

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Entry details

Entry Name:	Black History Month Luncheon
Institution Name:	California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Natalia Alvarado, Assistant Marketing Manager

The Black History Month event, A Taste of Black History Diaspora, was designed to reflect CPPE Dining’s mission of fostering community, cultural awareness, and connection through food. The menu explored the global influence of the African diaspora, linking African culinary traditions with Southern United States cuisine. Within a residential dining setting, food served as both a source of comfort and an educational tool for students living away from home. Through collaboration, culinary innovation, and inclusive menu planning— with clear allergen labeling and plant-based options— the program created an accessible, immersive dining experience that celebrated Black heritage, storytelling, and belonging.

Essay:

The menu was structured as a culinary progression highlighting African, Caribbean, and Southern U.S. influences through diverse techniques and authentic preparation methods. East African dishes such as Nyama Choma with kachumbari and Ethiopian Doro Wat with injera emphasized traditional cooking practices, while West African and diaspora flavors appeared in jollof rice, tomato-based stews, and plantain dishes. North African elements like bissara and shakshuka added regional depth.

Southern cuisine demonstrated the enduring legacy of African culinary traditions through smoked brisket, pulled pork, Savannah red rice, and braised greens, all prepared using low-and-slow techniques. A whole smoked alligator served as a centerpiece, showcasing advanced culinary execution and interactive learning.

Plant-forward dishes were integrated throughout, maintaining cultural authenticity while ensuring inclusivity. Across all stations, techniques such as braising, smoking, grilling, stewing, and baking were utilized. Strict food safety protocols, allergen transparency and detailed production planning ensured quality, safety and accessibility. Together, the menu delivered technical precision, cultural authenticity, and a cohesive narrative of the African diaspora's global culinary impact.

Introduction:

The event transformed Centerpointe Dining Commons into an immersive cultural environment designed to promote belonging, engagement and education among residential students. Collaboration with campus partners— including Cal Poly Pomona's Black Student Union, Black Resource Center, Black Women of Excellence, Black Thriving Initiative and Library— ensured authentic representation and meaningful programming. The integration of decor, live entertainment, interactive activities and student involvement aligned with Cal Poly Pomona's Learn by Doing philosophy. By combining cultural celebration with hands-on participation, the event created a dynamic space where students could connect, learn, and engage beyond the traditional dining experience.

Essay:

The dining space was transformed using Pan-African colors and intentional layout design to encourage movement, interaction and prolonged engagement. Student organizations played a central role in shaping decor, programming and authenticity. Live music from the Cal Poly Pomona Jazz Band created an inviting atmosphere, while interactive experiences— such as box braiding demonstrations and the outdoor alligator smoking station— provided educational engagement.

Student employees worked alongside professional staff in both culinary and service roles, reinforcing experiential learning. Informational tabling from campus organizations connected students to resources and involvement opportunities. Installations such as the student-created "uplift tree" (or "Tree of Light") encouraged reflection and participation, while the library's curated book display of Black authors extended learning beyond the event.

Sustainability was integrated through recycled materials used in installations and food waste tracking via Winnow technology. Together, these elements created a multi-sensory, student-centered experience that blended culture, education and community engagement within Centerpointe.

Introduction:

A strategic, multi-channel marketing approach was implemented to build anticipation and maximize engagement among residential students. Promotion emphasized repeated exposure in high-traffic housing areas and consistent visual branding across print and digital platforms. Partnerships with student organizations enhanced credibility and expanded outreach through peer networks. Messaging highlighted not only the menu but also the cultural, educational and interactive components of the event, positioning it as more than a themed meal. This targeted approach successfully generated excitement and encouraged students to participate in a shared residential dining experience centered on community and cultural celebration.

Essay:

Marketing efforts combined physical signage, digital media and peer-driven outreach to maximize visibility. Posters, A-frames, banners and campus digital screens ensured consistent exposure, while Instagram posts showcased featured dishes and activities to generate interest and social sharing. Housing newsletters and campus-wide emails provided direct communication to students.

Collaboration with Cal Poly Pomona's Black Student Union, Black Resource Center and Black Women of Excellence amplified promotion through trusted student networks, reinforcing authenticity and encouraging attendance.

Messaging emphasized both the culinary experience and interactive programming, helping students understand the event's broader purpose.

During the event, engagement was sustained through participatory elements such as the uplift tree, informational tabling and book displays. Feedback collection through direct comments and observation indicated strong student satisfaction, with many highlighting both food quality and overall experience. This integrated marketing strategy successfully drove attendance, enhanced participation and positioned the event as a memorable, community-centered dining experience.

Introduction:

Sustainability, student engagement, and measurable impact were central to the event's success. Strong collaboration with campus partners and integration of locally sourced ingredients reinforced environmental stewardship and institutional values. The program created leadership and participation opportunities for students while strengthening Centerpointe Dining Commons as a hub for community connection. By combining cultural programming, operational excellence and sustainability practices, the event demonstrated a scalable model for residential engagement. Its success established a foundation for future initiatives that prioritize inclusivity, education and community-building within campus dining.

Essay:

The event achieved significant increases in both participation and revenue, demonstrating measurable impact. Attendance reached 1,256 guests, exceeding both the previous year and typical daily averages. Door sales increased by 56.7% compared to the prior week, with sustained engagement observed in following weeks. Students remained in the dining space longer, actively participating in programming and returning for additional servings, reflecting high satisfaction.

Sustainability efforts included sourcing produce from local Spadra Farm, integrating campus-grown ingredients into multiple dishes. Recycled materials were used for installations, and food waste was monitored using AI-driven tracking systems, like Winnow and MetaFoodX, to inform future operational improvements.

Student organizations and employees played a critical role in execution, contributing to planning, education and peer engagement. Interactive elements such as live demonstrations, cultural activities and educational displays fostered connection and learning. Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate the event's success in enhancing dining engagement, supporting sustainability and strengthening community within the residential environment.

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