

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

# NCCU, Duke build bridges

## Schools to share festival, academics

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At Duke and N.C. Central universities, student government leaders have learned how to take an intensely negative event and turn it into an opportunity to bring Durham residents closer together.

On Oct. 15 the universities will host a festival that planners hope will result in increased community engagement between students and Durham residents.

"We're not trying to hide the fact that the impetus for this came from the scrutiny Duke received from the lacrosse situation," said Daniel Bowes, referring to the March 13 party where police say three Duke lacrosse players raped a female NCCU student.

Bowes is a member of Duke's student government and is their chief organizer of the event.

The two universities held a Unity Day Aug. 30 at the Durham Bulls Athletic Park, but Bowes said the October festival will be different.

"This is closer to doing something we'd like to facilitate throughout the year," he said.

"We don't want people just sitting around listening to music; we want them to interact."

Bowes said the festival will have free food and games and will feature performances from both schools' jazz bands. The NCCU step team also will perform. The festival will be held either near the athletic park or on the NCCU campus.

The event will be held in conjunction with the N.C. Human Relations Commission.

George Allison, the commission's director, said he hopes the event will help heal rifts in the community.

He said less than a year before the lacrosse incident occurred, a cross was burned on a black family's lawn in Durham.

"If nothing's done, the open wound caused by one's perceptions of what was done will only get worse," he said.

"We're trying to help the city move forward in a more harmonious way.

"When you have student bodies willing to work together, it will cause a real unifying force between the two schools that will spill over into the community."

The schools are collaborating on other things as well. The study abroad offices at both schools are working on a pilot program that will send students from both schools to Ghana for the summer.

Duke also will offer a class through the Center for Documentary Studies that focuses on the history of race relations in Durham, said Lynn McKnight, the associate director for programs and communications at the center.

The course will be open to NCCU students as well as members of the public.

Until then, organizers hope the festival will start the healing process.

"We hope to inspire people to go out in the community and build unity," Allison said.

"Neighbors are neighbors from all walks of life."

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