

New center unifies minority students

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In order to bring the black students on campus together, Washington and Lee has converted Lee House, a former upperclass dormitory into the new Minority Cultural Center.

Five students live in the center that also houses the offices of the Student Association for Black Unity (SABU) and the Black American Law Students Association.

Ron Magee, a junior and the house's manager, said the function of the center is "to have somewhat of a place where minority students can come together and find out about themselves in a non-formal atmosphere. We can laugh and talk and tell jokes.

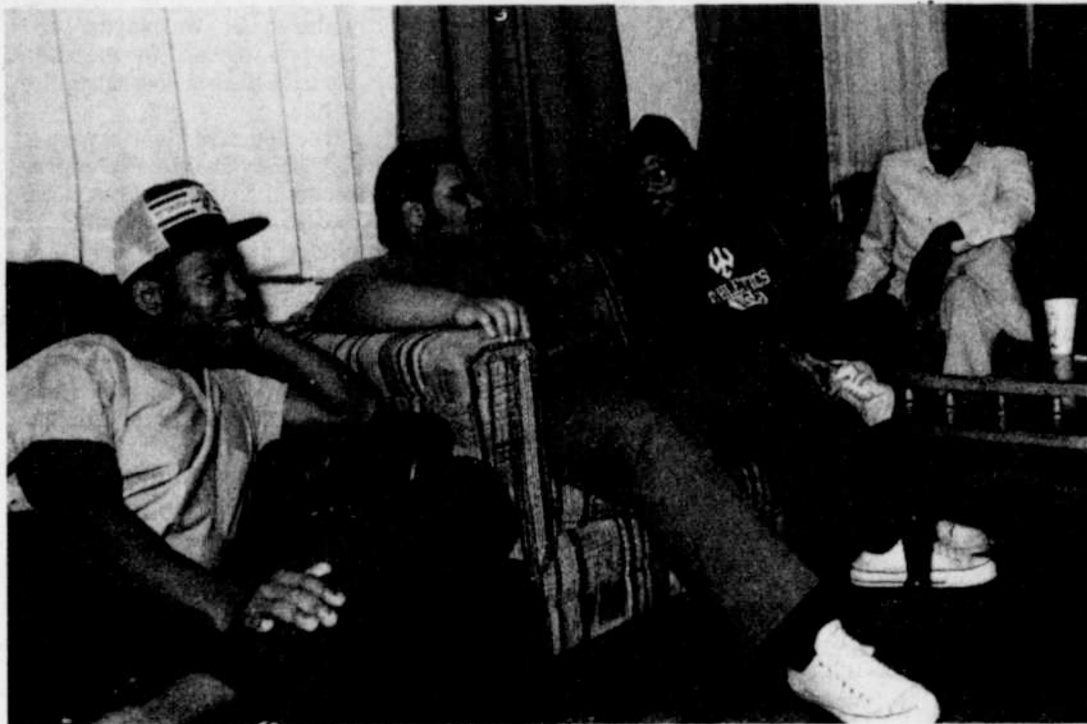
"Before, with SABU, we could not get everybody together at a particular time. Also, this removes the restraints," he said.

John White, director of minority affairs at the university, said, "One element that tends to set our center apart from other similar facilities at other campuses is the residential aspect. I think this will help to create the kind of community atmosphere that we hope to generate with the center."

Magee explained that parental support was essential in ac-

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Students enjoy a little after-supper television recently in the new Minority Cultural Center on Lee Avenue. (Phi photo by David Sprunt)

quiring the house. Parents of many of the black students formed a committee to speak with President Robert Huntley, and that "set the wheels in motion," Magee said.

After obtaining the house, parents also helped by making curtains, choosing furniture, and other essentials. White emphasized that they weren't the only ones responsible, though.

"The university did a simply superb job in providing this facility," Magee said. He specifically complimented the faculty, administration and the Executive Committee.

The minority center plans to provide a full social life, but shuns all comparisons to a fraternity.

"We look at the fraternity system as a successful one," said Magee, "but we're not performing the function of a fraternity house. Brotherhood and camaraderie will be found here too...but, our main purpose is performing functions for minority students."

Besides parties, the Center has planned speakers, art shows and concerts, and conferences with students from other schools. A reception with the faculty and hosting a sociology class have been among the activities sponsored thus far this year.

One fear has been that the center may tend to separate the students from the rest of W&L life, but Magee does not foresee a problem.

"I don't think this university will ever get a significant number of black students that we could become separatists. We have to integrate...Students can retreat here once in a while, but they must still undergo the mainstream at W&L," he said.

"The center is a place to allow black students to find themselves, mature, and adjust to life at W&L," he said.