

# Black colleges stepping into battle of bulge

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) - As students talk over the thump of rapper Chingy's "Right Thurr," Tina Carroll stands in a corner of the university dining hall deliberating.

Piled in front of her are sliced carrots, peas and steaming squash chunks. Nearby, breaded chicken patties fan out like meaty playing cards, and french fries glisten in fat-laden glory.

Carroll nibbles her manicured fingernails, her eyes darting between each selection.

At 187 pounds — well above what's recommended for her 5-foot-2 frame — the 22-year-old graduate student

knows decisions she makes here could mean the difference between the bootylicious body of her dreams and a lifetime of weight gain.

Nationwide, health experts agree the obesity epidemic is striking hardest among Hispanics and Blacks, with waistlines and rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and stroke expanding at alarming rates.

Predominantly Black colleges like Norfolk State University are stepping in, rolling out veggie-heavy menus, building walking trails and even launching campus-wide weight loss contests. Their

aim: to curb the ballooning of Black America by targeting the next generation.

"Our students are at a prime time in their lives where they can make choices that can prevent them from having these problems," said Cynthia Burwell, head of Norfolk State's internship programs and an organizer of the health effort.

Similar weight-loss initiatives have been started at five other historically Black colleges: Talladega College in Alabama, Alcorn State University in Mississippi, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, South Carolina State University and Wiley Col-

lege in Texas.

Their programs are supported through federal grants distributed by the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, or NAFEO. Later, the umbrella group will turn over data on student weight trends to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' minority health office for review.

NAFEO grew concerned last year after noticing national obesity trends having an especially striking impact at the 120 schools it represents.

"Obesity, as we all know, is an epidemic across the

country, particularly affecting minorities," said NAFEO senior health adviser Julia Anderson. "It's no secret."

Estimates are that nearly two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese.

Blacks, especially women, are carrying many of the pounds. A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found as many as 70.6 percent of Black women across various age groups qualified as overweight or obese between 1999 and 2002.

And while few of the participating Black colleges keep hard data, Alcorn State Human Sciences Chairman

Ross Santell said it's easy to see the weight problem is alive and well on Black campuses.

"Many, many, many students are obese," said Santell, organizer of his campus' weight-loss effort, which includes passing out pedometers.

"If you look around campus, you can see that clearly our student body is overweight."

Officials at Wiley estimate nearly 25 percent of their students are overweight, and at Lincoln University, 90 students and staffers have already signed up to shed *(See Bulge, Page 6)*

# Displaced Louisiana students see both good, bad

AMHERST, Mass. (AP) - Accustomed to low and flat New Orleans, Tameka Noel finds herself huffing and puffing as she walks the hilly campus of Amherst College near the Berkshire Mountains. And though it's just October, it already feels like winter to her.

She misses friends, and Cajun food, and Bourbon Street, which puts small-town Amherst's nightlife to shame.

She and the six other students from Xavier University who wound up here this semester won't lie and tell you Hurricane Katrina was the

best thing that ever happened to them, just because they get to spend time at an elite liberal arts college. They will, however, tell you they are grateful for the hospitality, and that — when all is said and done — their time at Amherst might have broadened their education.

"Some days are difficult and others aren't," said Noel, a senior from New Boston, Texas, who is part of Xavier's well-regarded premed program. "But I think being outside your comfort zone is something everybody should experience."

An estimated 75,000 col-

lege students were displaced from New Orleans by the storm. Many are still in the South, or at least at schools close to family. But others are temporarily enrolled at colleges far from home, both geographically and culturally. About a dozen from Xavier, a historically Black, Roman Catholic school, were taken in by Amherst and nearby Williams — schools some would call archetypal New England liberal arts colleges.

Around the country, host schools have worked hard to make the students feel welcome. Loyola of Chicago,

which accommodated about 300, hosted a Midwest-themed welcome barbecue and a party to watch a New Orleans Saints football game. Washington & Lee University had Cajun night in the dining hall. Santa Clara University in California gave students skateboards and offered a one-time class called "Skateboard Etiquette 101," figuring it would help students both get around and feel more Californian.

Amherst took its visitors shopping for the winter clothes they suddenly needed, and is even paying for them to fly home for

Thanksgiving. In the classroom, it organized tutorials to help them catch up after missing the first two weeks of class. College officials say the students are doing fine academically.

For the Xavier students, it's a way to get the courses they need to stay on track to medical school. But it's also a chance to try some new things. At Xavier, they said, most classes are in a lecture-and-drill format.

Their Amherst seminars have been a nice change of pace in both structure and content.

"We discussed homo-

sexuality, which is definitely a big taboo at Xavier, being Catholic and all that," said Noel, who added an elective on "cross-cultural constructions of gender" to her science coursework. The different classroom experience "is something I've enjoyed," she said.

In interviews with students scattered across the country, several said they had found the chance to spend a few months at another college unexpectedly valuable.

"I wouldn't take it back. I honestly wouldn't," said Dawnyel Verrett, a junior *(See Students, Page 12)*



*Town hall meeting*  
 Hosted by Councilwoman Stephanie S. Smith

**Date:** Thursday, November 3, 2005  
**Location:** Theron and Naomi Goynes Elementary School  
 3904 Deer Springs Way  
 North Las Vegas

**Time:** 6:30 p.m.

**Topics:**

- Waste Water Facility
- Comprehensive Plan
- Craig Ranch Regional Park
- Aliante Library
- Police - Community

For more information, please contact: Donna Gamble, 633-1007 or Michelle Bailey-Hedgepeth, 633-1178.

  
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