

# Sankofa Black Culture Living Learning Community

Housing and Residential Life in partnership with Black Programs and Student Success Center

## Community Description

The Sankofa Black Culture Living Learning Community (LLC) is a supportive environment where students who share interest in exploring, celebrating, and being deeply connected with Black culture can live together and participate in programs that promote their academic, social, and personal development. The Sankofa LLC is designed to enhance residents' sense of belonging at NMSU while also examining local, national, and global issues relevant to Black culture.

Residents of the Sankofa LLC will be encouraged to actively and intentionally participate in opportunities to connect with faculty, peers, and the office of Black Programs. In addition, students will engage in events and activities that focus on academic success, cultural awareness, and civic engagement while addressing issues of interest to the Black community.

Students of any racial, ethnic, or cultural background with an interest in Black culture are welcome to make their home in the Sankofa LLC. Located in one of our comfortable campus apartment communities, the LLC is open to students who are sophomores or above (including graduate students). Co-ed housing is available upon request.

## What's in a Name?

*Sankofa* is an African word and symbol that originated with the Akan tribe in Ghana and is widely used in Black communities globally. The literal translation of the word is *"it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind."* Sankofa as a metaphorical symbol is depicted either as a stylized heart or as a bird with its head turned backward taking an egg from its back. This expresses the importance of reaching back to knowledge gained in the past and bringing it into the present to make positive progress. This symbolizes the Akan people's quest for knowledge based on critical examination and intelligent, patient investigation.

Sankofa is the belief that an individual or community must reach back to reclaim that which is lost to move forward. This aligns with the LLC's mission to create a greater sense of community and connectedness through knowledge of the past and exposure to the Black diaspora in order to inspire a more inclusive culture for students at NMSU.

## Community Pillars: R.E.B.I.R.T.H.

The Sankofa LLC is guided by seven community pillars, or core values, that allow for residents to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially while establishing a strong, respectful, and inclusive community. Residents are expected to uphold these pillars in and out of the community. These pillars are:

- **Respect** — due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others. This means being considerate, thoughtful, attentive, polite, courteous, and civil.
- **Equanimity** — psychological stability and composure undisturbed by negative experience or exposure to pain and other phenomena that may cause others to lose the balance of their mind; practicing mental calmness and self-control especially in difficult situations.
- **Black Excellence** — Black excellence is the mindset, backed by continuous action, to look within ourselves and act in ways that progress our communities without discrediting the effect of forces outside of our communities.
- **Integrity** — the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. This means being morally upright, honorable, having good character, and upholding principles of ethics and righteousness.
- **Responsibility** — having a duty to deal with something, having control, or the state of being accountable. This means having control of one's self, taking initiative within the community, and holding one's self and others accountable for their actions.
- **Testimony** — evidence or proof provided by the existence or appearance of something. This means recognizing and respecting that everyone has a story and an experience that has shaped them. As a community, our position

is to transform from where we are into improved versions of ourselves, becoming walking testimonies of our community.

- **Heritage** — something that is handed down from the past, as a tradition; something that comes or belongs to one by reason of birth; an inherited lot or portion. This means celebrating that we have a rich heritage of honor, pride, and courage that has been handed down from our ancestors and guides. It is our responsibility to position ourselves to receive the greatness of our destiny.

Rebirth is defined as a new or second birth, a spiritual regeneration, and a renewed existence, activity, or growth. The Sankofa LLC will create a period of new growth where Black students and all students interested in Black culture can integrate their academic and social experiences to build on the sense of belonging and commitment to student success that students have experienced in Black Programs since 1970.

### **Proposed Examples of Events and Activities**

In conjunction with Black Programs, as well as NMSU faculty and staff, there will be a variety of thematic events and activities for Sankofa LLC residents to participate in personal and community growth. The Housing and Residential Life program curriculum provides a framework for activities that center around the following learning objectives: Personal Safety and Wellness, Academic Excellence, World Impact, Aggie Pride, and Life Skills. Examples of possible types of programs include:

- Movie nights with critical discussion of themes of Blackness and Black culture with the Director of Black Programs
- Self-care seminars
- Community service participation
- Open Mic and Spoken Word talent nights
- Cooking for the Culture cooking lessons
- Co-programming with Black Programs and other NMSU offices by inviting Sankofa LLC residents to participate in events that are already taking place around campus
- Participation in intramural sports