

Activities coordinator reflects on virtual homecoming plans

By Lea Houston
Gazette Reporter

"Homecoming is usually a time to gather around, reconnect with alumni, enjoy each other's company and, overall, just [represent] the university with as much Lion Pride as you have," said Raynita Mason, 74th Miss Langston University and business management and psychology major.

Mason is one of several students on campus who were wary of the virtual homecoming event this year, questioning if it would still have the full traditional impact as it typically does in person.

According to an email sent July 3 by Langston University

"We couldn't have what we had in the past homecoming, so I feel as if I have failed the student body because we couldn't have the homecoming we are used to."

— Zhamar "Mac" McAdory,
LU activities coordinator

President Dr. Kent Smith Jr., due to the pandemic and to reduce the spread of COVID-19, LU, as well as other HBCUs, decided to cancel all in-person homecoming activities.

With homecoming being

virtual instead of physical this year, Activities Coordinator Zhamar "Mac" McAdory worried there would be much less student and alumni participation.

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had in the past homecoming," McAdory said, "so I feel as if I have failed the student body because we couldn't have the homecoming we are used to."

With previous homecoming events being hosted outside, on the yard, complete with food trucks and pop-up shops, making homecoming enjoyable was quite difficult for McAdory and the Students Activities Board.

McAdory said he worried homecoming was more of "a disservice to the Langston University students" because it was the students' money that was being used to put on the events.

"If anything," McAdory said, "I want to give the money back with scholarship opportunities."

He said that because students are stuck at looking at a computer screen throughout the day for classes, he and SAB worried there wouldn't be a lot of participation for the virtual homecoming.

"People have to realize that, if a student has Zoom classes 9-5 looking at the screen all day, they are ready to go out and experience the world once they're done," McAdory said. "When people hear Zoom, they think of class... why would I host a Zoom event, when you're already on Zoom the entire day?"

Regardless, McAdory said, it was still important that they promote homecoming and encourage participation as much as possible.

Traditional homecoming not possible in 2020

By Jonah Fabian
Contributing Writer

As homecoming 2020 began Oct. 12, Langston University was forced to deliver a virtual experience in place of the traditional one.

Homecoming at LU normally provides free access to T-shirts, food, talent shows, comedy shows, band events, concerts and a football game. Alumni fill the lots around campus as thousands of students and families support their alma mater.

Homecoming 2020 was planned to be another extravagant week, just like any other, until COVID-19 turned the world upside down. With social distancing in place, many questioned their excitement.

"I am going to miss the comedian show and the football game the most," said sophomore broadcast journalism major Jeremiah Harrison.

Harrison is an LU ambassador as well as Mr. 1909 for the NAACP. As a broadcast journalism major, he has been involved with many events in the past, including

taking photos during 2019's homecoming events for the Langston Student Activities Board.

With the new virtual learning that students are forced to participate in due to CDC guidelines, freshmen haven't been able to fully experience the eventful side of Langston. This is shown even more after the prior announcement of the cancellation of Homecoming 2020.

"Our freshmen are really missing out on something that's really big, not only for Langston but for all HBCUs," Harrison said. "Them not getting to experience such a part of Langston and HBCU culture is definitely hindering their experience."

With the absence of many in-person events and classes, upperclassmen and staff wondered if freshmen were going to grasp an emotional attachment to their HBCU and the culture Langston provides.

"I feel like it stifles their ability to have longevity here at Langston," Harrison said. "Without them getting to experience what Langston

is really like, their basically paying for an online experience."

The ambassadors and SAB teamed up and tried to make the most of what seemed to be an impossible task of creating a virtual homecoming experience.

"We [were] trying to get events to be in person, but it's so hard," said sophomore nursing major Rasheedah Blackwood. Blackwood is the community service co-chair for SAB and is part of the team that put on this year's homecoming.

"I am so sad we [didn't] get to experience a homecoming like last year because it was so fun last year, and it is just one of those things that you can't wait to do again," Blackwood said.

It is hard to say whether Homecoming 2020 was anything comparable to years past, but SAB made it possible to put on some of the traditional events virtually.

"There will still be a virtual talent show, comedy show with special guest and a hip-hop concert," Blackwood said.

You're invited to the 15th Annual President's Scholarship Gala!

This gala event will be a joyful celebration of LU's amazing student body and the excellence of our academic programs. We all enjoy the success stories—like Brooklyn Baker, a 2020 LU Biology graduate who attended LU on a full ride.

"Going to Langston has been the best decision of my life," Brooklyn said. "It has opened up so many opportunities for me—even a summer internship at Harvard Medical School. Without scholarships, I would not be in school."

Our virtual gala advances educational opportunity for students like Brooklyn. Attendance at this year's gala is free. However, we need your contributions to ensure our students receive much-needed financial support. All money raised during the evening will benefit students—preparing them to serve our communities as leaders. Though it may look a little different in 2020, below is how you can continue to create life-changing opportunities for our students.

Make a gift today to support this year's event! Attend the 2020 Annual President's Scholarship Gala online. Encourage your family and friends to join in and support the University by making a contribution. Set up a corporate or individual sponsorship. Donate directly online or use the GIVLY app—it's easy!

Your support will help LU students earn a degree and achieve their dreams. Consider donating now or during our virtual President's Gala event and enable students to continue their enrollment. Thank you for each effort you make to impact the next generation!

When: Thursday, Oct. 29, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Where: Facebook Premiere - Langston University Official Page

What: LU Choir and Band Performances + Video Vignettes