

CAMPUS TIMES Friday, April 15, 1983

Students, Deanto Collaborate on Black Studies Program

By Behshad Dowlatshahi

The UR established a Center for Afro-American Studies in 1970 to "provide an opportunity for students to learn about and study the black experience." The program died out in the mid 70's.



Louis Sheppard

are trying to revive the program. "This university could benefit a great deal by a Black Studies Program," offering courses that recognize the contributions of blacks and exploring their history and culture, said Zachary Harris, president of the Black Students Union (BSU).

"The truth is we don't have very much right now. We have a few courses but not not much in black history or black studies," said J. Paul Hunter, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Hunter met with the BSU and the Pan-African Graduate Students Association (PAGSA) recently and decided to appoint a task force to look into the situation, he said.

The task force, which will be comprised of three faculty members and two students, will "define things we are lacking in, what our resources are, and what we can expect to do,"

Hunter said. It is much too early to think about offering a major in this area, he said, "since there aren't even any courses to speak of yet."

Louis Sheppard, a graduate history student and chairman of the PAGSA, said he is concerned that the a Pan-African program "will be looked into but will never get off the ground." He said the old Afro-American department consisted of one person and was a "rubber stamp program."

The undergraduate and graduate black students are united in their belief that a Pan-African Studies Program, either completely autonomous or under the auspices of the history department, should be set up to provide students with a concrete background in black history, Sheppard said.

"Our patience is not inexhaustable," he said, "If we're put into a trick bag again, there will be severe con-

sequences." Hunter said he could not predict how long the process would take but that "universities are slow." He said hiring more black faculty will be "an absolutely necessary step since without them we don't have much of a core."

Provost Richard O'Brien said there would be little support for a Black Studies major, "mainly because it would not lead to any professional careers."

Former Vice President for Student Affairs Bernard Gifford said he is not convinced that a separate department should be set up. He attributed the disintegration of the old Afro-American Studies program to a lack of interest and said that sufficient interest still does not exist.

"Every department should offer courses that acknowledge and celebrate black contributions. A segregated department is not the best way to communicate," he said.