

- 7. **Review your use of visuals.** Do they support your message? Are they appropriate, effective, and clearly presented?
- 8. **Use peer review to identify areas needing improvement.**

### Editing and Proofreading

1. **Read your paper aloud.**
  - Are ideas stated in specific language readers can understand?
  - Do any words have connotations unsuited to your purpose or audience?
  - Do the tone and style suit your topic, audience, and message?
2. **Use peer editing to locate errors you may have missed.**

## STUDENT PAPER

This paper was written in response to the following assignment:

Write a 500–750 word persuasive essay about a current social or political issue. Avoid writing about subjects such as abortion or capital punishment unless you can provide a new or unique angle. Document use of any outside sources.

### FIRST DRAFT WITH INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS

This college, like many others, has and needs a Black Student Union. It has nothing to do  
*Weak, vague What does everyone "seem to think"? What claims?*  
with what everyone seems to think it has. A lot of people who make these claims have never  
 even bothered to visit the Black Student Union or bothered to check the facts they saw in  
 the paper. *What did they see in the paper?*

People say black students are getting paid to run their organization, which is so totally  
*wordy, revise*  
not the case. In fact, the Black Student Union only receives money to operate a study center  
 that, in fact, serves lots of non-blacks because the Acamdemic Support Center. The union  
*SP Words missing?*  
 received money last year, but most of it went to fix the building, which does belong to the  
 university.

Many people criticize the Black Student Center for <sup>*"fostering"?*</sup> foresting racial discrimination. This is not the case. We live in integrated dorms, attend integrated classes, and play on integrated teams. The few hours a week a student might spend at the BSU hardly threatens to create racial isolation. Other students have specialized centers, and no one seems bothered about that. In addition, people have accused the BSU of being a hotbed of radical politics. I see no evidence of this. *explain, expand*

Black students need the BSU. Black students are a minority on this campus. It is easy for them to feel alienated and isolated. And they are at high risk for failure. "Since only one of eight black males entering a university will graduate, it is imperative that we seek remedies to support their academic achievement and professional advancement" (Smith). And the BSU does just that. Black students have problems finding friends and building positive reinforcement networks that provide needed personal support. Because few of their friends in high school were college-bound, they had to isolate themselves and study on their own. This habit, however, is not always the best strategy in college. Many students benefited from "social promotion" and when they get to college, they discover that their A's and B's were really more equal to C's and D's in better suburban schools. The Black Student Union offers African American students a place to relax, to interact with older students, and work to make the university a more hospitable place for minorities.

#### Works Cited

Smith, Dean. *Black Males in Crisis*. New York: Scribners, 2011. Print.

*(Continued)*

## REVISION NOTES

- You have an interesting topic for a persuasive essay, but you need to make several improvements to produce a truly effective paper.*
- \* You mention that the Black Student Union has critics and refer to the recent newspaper article. Expand this point. Explain the claims and criticisms of those who oppose the Black Student Union, then disprove or discount them point by point.*
- \* You need to provide additional factual support to counter charges that the Union is getting too much money.*
- \* Document sources fully. You list the Smith book in Works Cited but do not show the page reference for the quote you use.*
- \* Finally, read your draft out loud. Missing words, awkward sentences, and wordy phrases are easier to hear than see.*

## REVISED DRAFT

### Why a Black Student Union?

Before any controversial issue can be discussed, there is usually a certain amount of misinformation to deal with. This is clearly the case with the Black Student Union. Many students have voiced concern and written letters to the editor since the college paper revealed that \$540,000 was being allocated to the Union (Kane 1). The article stated that \$52,000 was going to salaries, making the Black Student Union the only student organization with a paid staff.

First of all, the bulk of the money allocated to the Union is dedicated to renovating the building, which is university property. Constructed in 1962, the building has not had major repairs since 1974. Roof leaks, first reported to the administration three years ago, have led to substantial and costly damage. In addition, it is the only building that was not retrofitted with new heating and air conditioning systems in 1996 (CSU 22). Also, the building still does not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Wheelchair ramps must be installed by court order (CSU 23).

Second, no one at the Union receives a salary for student activities. Five graduate students are paid to tutor remedial classes. Given the lack of space in the cramped Academic Support Center, use of the Black Student Union makes sense and creates more openings in the Center. Many non-black students attend classes and remedial seminars at the Union. Less than half the graduates of the Internet course last semester were African American (Kane 2).

*(Continued)*

But there are other objections to the Union. Why should blacks have their own facility? Many on campus see the presence of a black student union as a kind of self-imposed apartheid. The Union has also been criticized for being the center of racially hostile militancy.

The Black Student Union hardly threatens to impose a new kind of segregation. We live in integrated dorms, attend integrated classes, participate in integrated sports, and serve on mostly white and Asian academic committees. The few hours a week a student might spend at the BSU hardly threatens racial isolation—any more than the women's center risks ending coeducation or the Newman Center pits Catholics against Protestants. From my own observations, I see little evidence of the radical and extremist politics union opponents mention. The most popular event the Black Student Union holds is Career Week, when black students line up to meet representatives from AT&T, IBM, Bank One, and 3M. Most students are concerned about academic performance and career options rather than radical politics. True, the Union has sponsored some controversial speakers, but so has the university itself. Much of the "extremist literature" cited in a campus editorial is not distributed by the Union. The Union receives a lot of free literature in the mail, which has been traditionally displayed in the lobby. When it was brought to the attention of the board that some of the pamphlets were anti-Semitic, members took quick steps to screen incoming publications and discard "hate literature."

The real purpose of the Union is to assist African Americans to succeed on campus. Comprising less than 5% of the student body, blacks easily feel alienated, particularly those who graduated from predominately black high schools. After studying the experiences of black students in fifteen major colleges, Dean Smith concluded, "Since only one of eight black males entering a university will graduate, it is imperative that we seek remedies to support their academic achievement and professional advancement" (12). Many black students have difficulty forming friendships and joining organizations. Often there were only a handful of college-bound students in their schools. To survive, they had to isolate themselves, studying alone to avoid associating with peers resentful of their dedication to academics. Outcasts in high school, these students find college bewildering. They are not accustomed to participating in class or working in groups. They often discover that they are woefully unprepared for college. Coming from schools with 50–75% dropout rates, many suffered from "social promotion." They discover that their A's and B's are only equal to C's and D's in better suburban schools. The Black Student Union offers African American students a place to relax, interact with older students, and work to make the university a more hospitable place for minorities.

Given the history of discrimination and disadvantage faced by African Americans, the Union can be a positive asset. Is it a crutch, an undeserved luxury? No one can deny that black students feel handicapped on campus. No one complains about the cost of wheelchair ramps and elevators which benefit a handful of physically disabled students. Why should we ignore the crippling legacy of racism?

#### Works Cited

- California State University Budget Office. CSU Facilities Report. Sacramento, 2011. Web. 5 May 2011.
- Kane, Kelly. "BSU Funding Furor." *Campus Times* 1 May 2011: 1–2. Print.
- Smith, Dean. *Black Males in Crisis*. New York: Scribners, 2011. Print.