

BU to Contribute \$250,000 to MLK Memorial

Project includes a monument honoring University's most famous alumnus



BU WILL CONTRIBUTE \$250,000 to a multipronged initiative honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS'55, Hon.'59), Robert A. Brown, president of BU, announced at an observance of the civil rights leader's birthday on January 21.

The \$12 million initiative, which will include a \$5 million monument on the Boston Common to BU's most famous alumnus, will commemorate the work of King and his wife, Coretta Scott King.

The University's donation "will see the project through to completion and ensure that future generations of Bostonians and visitors will appreciate Martin Luther King's extraordinary legacy and what his years in Boston meant to him, to Mrs. King, and to all of us," Brown said during the ceremony in the George Sherman Union

US Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.), who in November became the first African American woman elected to Congress from Massachusetts, gives the keynote address at the ceremony marking the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS'55, Hon.'59).

Metcalf Ballroom. He said the \$250,000 was contributed by alumni and friends of the University.

The ceremony, the first Martin Luther King, Jr., Day observance cosponsored by the University and the city of Boston, attracted an estimated crowd of 1,200 people who braved subzero wind chills.

Besides the Boston Common monument, scheduled for completion in early 2020 and coinciding with a \$28 million upgrade of the park, the King memorial initiative will include an eponymous center in Boston's Roxbury section that will pursue King's work to address economic inequality; a \$1 million endowment to pay for MLK-related programs at Roxbury's Twelfth Baptist Church, where he preached while studying at BU; and a new documentary about the Kings that will explore their lives and joint work in Boston. (Coretta Scott King graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music.)

The city and King Boston, a nonprofit working on the memorial initiative, will announce the winner later this winter. BU's contribution to the King memorial was one of two announced at the ceremony. The Boston Foundation, a 104-year-old philanthropy, pledged to donate \$500,000. **RICH BARLOW**

CONNECTING STUDENTS OF COLOR

Launched and led by students, the Minority Connection Initiative seeks to foster community

KEVIN SMITH RETURNED TO BU for sophomore year only to find that five of his peers and classmates had not; the African American men had all decided to switch to other schools.

"I did a little investigating, and it seemed they were unhappy with the atmosphere of the University as a whole," says Smith (ENG'17). "It led me to believe there were certain holes that needed to be filled."

So junior year, he cofounded the Minority Connection Initiative, now in its third year. The student-led organization has about 300 members on its email list; an average of 30 attend its events, aimed at connecting and strengthening the re-

lationships among BU students, faculty, and staff who identify as racial minorities. The events also promote and share information on the resources available to these students.

"Our events try to start a conversation and break the ice," says Minority Connection Initiative president Hodan Hashi (CAS'20). "Many of us went to predominantly white high schools, so we are used to not seeing students and professors who look like us. And for those students who did attend more integrated high schools, BU is a bit of a culture shock."

The Minority Connection Initiative is among more than 40 multicultural groups on campus. It has several ongo-

ing projects aimed at fostering community. "The Drop," for example, is a spreadsheet that identifies classes at BU taught by underrepresented faculty. Courses range from Investment Analysis and Portfolio Management, with Andrea Vedolin, a Questrom School of Business assistant professor of finance, to Issues in Higher Education Administration, with Raul Fernandez (COM'00, Wheelock'16), a Wheelock College of Education & Human Development lecturer. The group also hosts Professor Office Hours, where they invite faculty members of color to lead an informal discussion about their career path, research, and challenges they've faced.

AMY LASKOWSKI