Barrier Busters:
The University System of Georgia’s African-American Male Initiative (AAMI)
presented at the

*Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males’*

*Eighth African-American Male National Conference*

October 18, 2007

“Creating a More Educated Georgia”
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The University System of Georgia’s African-American Male Initiative (AAMI)

THE CHARGE: 2002

- Conduct research to identify the barriers to college participation for African-American males
- Devise strategies to overcome those barriers
- Create new opportunities for access and participation
- MISSION: Enhance the recruitment, retention and graduation of Black males in the University System of Georgia

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COMPONENTS OF “THE AAMI STUDY”:

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR EXTERNAL RESEARCH STUDY
• Conducted via the state’s Department of Administrative Services

EXTERNAL RESEARCH STUDY
• Matlock Advertising & Public Relations/Paul Warner & Assoc.

USG TASK FORCE
• 50-Member Task Force on Enhancing Access for African-American Males

AAMI PILOT PROGRAMS
• Pilot funding provided for programmatic efforts at USG institutions

STRATEGIC INTEGRATED MARKETING
• Development and implementation of marketing plan and collaterals

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THE TASK FORCE PROCESS
Six Task Force Subcommittees/Chairs:

• Research - Dr. Cathie Hudson, USO
• K-12 Pipeline - Dr. Jan Kettlewell, USO
• Recruitment/Marketing - Dr. Beheruz Sethna, UWG
• Retention - Dr. Portia Holmes Shields, ASU
• Programs of Excellence - Mr. Max Allen, GC&SU
• Partnership Opportunities - Mr. Curley Dossman, 100 Black Men of America

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THE RESEARCH PROCESS:
• 16 focus groups at eight USG institutions; one with Black male prisoners
• One-on-one interviews with USG administrators/staff
• Quantitative telephone surveys with 700:
  ➢ Parents
  ➢ 18-25 year old African-American males
  ➢ High-school juniors and seniors
  ➢ Guidance counselors and teachers
  ➢ USG students, graduates, faculty and staff
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AAMI PILOT PROGRAMS:

- Three years of pilot programs funded beginning in 2003-2004 academic year
- Funds allocated to new and existing efforts
- Target: K-12 and college-level Black males
- Goal: Efforts focused on enhancing Black male enrollment and retention in the USG

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TARGETED INTEGRATED MARKETING:

• Goal: Develop a comprehensive, integrated marketing plan to address the key communications goals of the AAMI

• Targets: Black males, parents, educators and “influencers”

• Mediums: Radio and television commercials, print brochures, website, bus-stop advertising, give-away collaterals

• Long-term, saturated marketing needed -- statewide -- by System and USG campuses

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SOME SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH FINDINGS:

- *African-American males’ attitudes and perceptions about college are heavily shaped by:*
  - Parents’ college attendance
  - Their socio-economic environment
  - Peer-group pressures
  - Academic experiences in middle through high school
  - Relationships with teachers, guidance counselors; participation in civic group programs

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ADDITIONAL FINDINGS:

- Some Black males are less inclined to attend college because they:
  - did not receive adequate academic preparation
  - lack the necessary self-motivation and discipline to attend
  - are intimidated by their perceptions of college/afraid to fail
  - see college as too great a financial investment; unable to envision benefits of delayed gratification
  - need to provide financial support for their families; and
  - are directed more toward vocational/technical schools by guidance counselors
  - self select the military
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ADDITIONAL FINDINGS:

• Significant and *early intervention* is required at the K-12 level

• Some Black males perceive *educational authority figures* as *rarely concerned* about their academic performance

• *Disproportionate tracking* to special education; often leads to anger, rebellion, suspensions/expulsion/crime ("Catch-22")

• Little done to help Black male students maneuver the *standardized test/college-application* process.

• Once enrolled in the USG, "*climate*” and *support* are *key factors* in retention

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ADDITIONAL FINDINGS:

• Many successful model programs exist to address the issues, nationally and in Georgia; must be expanded/replicated

• Programs are successful due to several commonalities

• The public and private sectors are highly supportive of our goals and the landscape is ripe to secure external funding and resources for this strategic initiative

• Federal and external funding have been received by USG campuses and programs

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OVER-ARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS:

• A comprehensive approach is needed to systemically address the identified “pipeline” problems

• Specific initiatives must address need for:
  ✓ Partnership with K-12 and civic groups directed at similar goals
  ✓ Enhanced communication (with parents, students, influencers) regarding the college-preparation process
  ✓ Targeted programs needed to track Black males toward the college preparatory curriculum at early stage, i.e., 6th grade
  ✓ Data reporting systems to identify vulnerabilities and monitor progress

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OUTCOMES TO-DATE:

- Black male enrollment in the USG increased by 16 percent from Fall 2002 to Fall 2006, from 17,068 to 19,780.

- The gap between the percentage increase of Black males and Black females enrolling annually in the USG is closing.

- Over three-year period, 22 pilot programs funded at 15 different USG institutions, investing more than $420,000.

- USG AAMI programs have grown from three in 2002 to more than 20 in 2007.

- Programs are attracting external funding, and some USG campuses are institutionalizing their efforts.

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WHAT CAN EDUCATORS AND EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES DO?

• Do the research; track the data.

• Develop marketing collaterals to cultivate communication between Black males, their parents and educators and your institution.

• Emphasize the need for enrollment in tough College Prep courses.

• Enhance interaction and programming (e.g., after-school groups, test-prep programs) with schools in your service areas and civic groups serving Black male students (6th grade and up).

• Increase “Campus Visitation Days” and summer-bridge programs to expand exposure for “first-generation” students.

• Form campus advisory boards and draft action plans to address your institution’s specific needs; involve community leaders in those efforts; seek external funding.

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What Can Individuals Do?

- Help change the images and the language that emanate from and depict our community; talk to young people about their role in creating this change.
- Mentor young men; volunteer with civic groups doing such work
- Get your church, fraternity, sorority, professional association involved
- As educators, advocate/sponsor activities aimed at enhancing K-12 partnership activities to augment counseling and test preparation
- Emphasize the need for Black males to enroll in College Prep; talk to them individually and collectively
- Talk to parents, individually and collectively (neighbors, civic groups)
- Just do something! Our young men and our community are at stake!!
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LET’S ROLL THE VIDEOTAPE . . .

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Thank you for your interest in the University System of Georgia’s African-American Male Initiative!

QUESTIONS???????