“The University System of Georgia’s African-American Male Initiative: A National Model”

A Presentation to the University System of Georgia’s Ninth Annual Diversity and Inclusion Summit

October 6, 2017
Enhancing Access:
The University System of Georgia’s African-American Male Initiative (AAMI)

THE CHARGE: September 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 by African-American males within the USG

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ORIGINAL COMPONENTS OF AAMI – HOW WE TACKLED THE ISSUE

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

RESEARCH STUDY
- Conducted quantitative and qualitative statewide research

REPORT TO THE USG’S BOARD OF REGENTS
- Outcomes and recommendations from the research and task force efforts

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

STRATEGIC INTEGRATED MARKETING
- Marketing collaterals aimed at Black males, parents and educators

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THE TASK FORCE PROCESS
Six Task Force Subcommittees:

• Research - Dr. Cathie Hudson, USG
• K-12 Pipeline - Dr. Jan Kettlewell, USG
• 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, Georgia Pacific Foundation and 100 Black Men of America

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THE RESEARCH PROCESS:

- 16 focus groups at eight USG institutions; one with young Black male prison inmates
- One-on-one interviews with USG administrators/staff
- Quantitative telephone surveys with a total of 700 persons:
  - 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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POSITIONING & STRATEGIC MARKETING EFFORTS:

- Media Relations
- AAMI websites (general, conferences, Million Dollar Player)
- Television and radio commercials
- Marketing/Outcomes Brochures
- AAMI Best Practices Conferences
- Benchmarking visits, briefings, dialogues

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CONSISTENT MISSION:
• The USG’s AAMI is laser focused on enhancing the recruitment, retention and graduation of Black males among the campuses of the University System of Georgia

• Initially: Improving Black male graduation from high school AND enhancing their enrollment and RPG rates within the colleges and universities of the USG

• Since 2009 (Change during Davis Administration): Increasing enrollment, retention, progression and graduation of USG’s Black male undergrads

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**SOME OF THE SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH FINDINGS:**

- **African-American males’ attitudes and perceptions about college are heavily shaped by:**
  - Parents’ college attendance
  - 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;
- are directed more toward vocational/technical schools by guidance counselors; and
- self select the military
MORE 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 testing/college-application** process.
- Once enrolled in the USG, "**climate**" and **support** are **key factors** in retention.

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OVER-ARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS:

• **Comprehensive approach** needed to address *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/monitor progress

  ✓ *Welcoming/supportive climates* on college/university campuses

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USG’s AAMI PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- $3.1 million in AAMI grants dispersed within USG since 2003
- The “matching-funds requirement” doubles that investment
- 153 individual grants awarded to 30 different USG institutions
- Over 9,000 Black male students served since 2003. This year, that number is projected to surpass 10,000 students!
- Over $1.75 million in external grants secured
- AAMI campus programs grew from 3 in 2002 to 27 in 2016

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**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:**

- **USG Black male enrollment increased by 85.09%** between Fall 2002-2015.
  - In Fall 2002, 17,068 Black males enrolled in the USG
  - By Fall 2016, 31,592 Black males enrolled in the USG

- **Degrees conferred to Black males increased by 133%** from FY2003 to FY 2016.
  - In FY03, 1,294 degrees were conferred annually
  - By FY16, that number more than doubled to 3,018 annually
NATIONAL RECOGNITION, AWARDS AND FUNDING:

- AAMI is widely benchmarked and nationally recognized. National outlets that have featured the program include: *The New York Times*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Education*, *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, and *USA Today*, to name a few. College Board also has featured the work.

- The *Lumina Foundation for Education* awarded AAMI a $500,000 grant in 2009. This funding bolstered our efforts and reputation.

- Invited to present at both the *White House Initiative (WHI) on African-American Educational Excellence* and the *WHI on HBCUs*. Also presented at *ACE, NCORE, Grantmakers for Education, International Colloquium on Black Males & other national convenings*.

- In 2016, we were awarded an $892,000 subgrant, as part of a major project of the U.S. Department of Education’s, IES Division.
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NEXT STEPS:

• AAMI has garnered the support of USG Chancellor Steve Wrigley — the fourth chancellor to continue the program.

• After being headquartered for over 10 years at Kennesaw State, the program has returned to the University System’s offices.

• Now overseen by Dr. Felita Williams and Ms. Sabrina Thompson, along with AAMI staffers Mr. Bob Wise and Ms. Wanda Gross

• Dedicated AAMI campus directors are expanding and enhancing their programs to serve even more students

• Goal is to move toward a more “aligned model”

• More Black males’ lives will be transformed!

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

For more information, please visit: www.usg.edu/aami
or contact the Office of Academic Partnerships in the Division of Academic Affairs at the Board of Regents

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