



The University System of Georgia's African-American Male Initiative

A Model for Increasing Higher Education Attainment

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ABSTRACT

In 2000, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG) reported the findings of a wide-sweeping benchmarking study that included an examination of student performance on a wide range of key indicators. The research effort unveiled extensive gaps in postsecondary educational attainment between African-American men and peer groups of African-American women and other populations. Leadership from the Board of Regents supported additional research that led to the formation of the University System of Georgia's African-American Male Initiative (AAMI) in 2002 and funding for pilot projects to address the barriers identified in the study.

AAMI is widely credited with being the first ever statewide effort explicitly focused on increasing higher educational attainment among Black males. Peers in the higher education community have sought to learn from and adapt the trail-blazing model as awareness of racial, ethnic and gender disparities has increased. Over the past decade, the initiative has matured and reached a pivotal developmental point. At this juncture, AAMI leadership is choosing to assess its work to date. To aid with the review effort, AAMI administrators contracted an independent consultant to undertake this pre-evaluation assessment.

The assessment detailed in the pages of this report initiates a multi-step process for documenting the AAMI model, articulating its program theory and establishing the foundation for independent assessment in the future. The study examines postsecondary educational attainment disparities nationally and for the

state of Georgia; recounts the evolution of the AAMI approach; articulates the program theory and logic model underlying AAMI; examines strengths and areas for improving the approach; and highlights implications of lessons learned from the initiative for private and corporate philanthropy as well as for higher education policy and practice. In execution of the study, the assessment team examined USG data on student enrollment, retention rates, graduation rates and number of degrees conferred; visited nearly half of the 25 USG campuses that host the AAMI program; thoroughly reviewed program archives and recent materials; and conducted more than 50 interviews with students, faculty, administrators, donors and current and past Regents familiar with AAMI.

Acknowledgments

Thinking Man Consulting (TMC) is grateful to Ms. Arlethia Perry-Johnson, Vice President of External Affairs at Kennesaw State University and Project Director of the University System of Georgia's AAMI, and her tremendous staff for the opportunity to support and, hopefully, advance their work through this case study assessment of AAMI. Ms. Perry-Johnson provided consistent guidance and a deeply nuanced understanding of the University System of Georgia and the AAMI that proved immensely helpful. Ms. Terri Arnold and Ms. Lyncia Norman contributed tireless administrative support and fact-finding to this effort. Ms. Sharon Duhart also was instrumental in aiding our team with gathering data and information and we thank her for contributions to this undertaking.

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A Comment about Terminology & Data

The term African-American is used throughout this document interchangeably with Black. The author acknowledges the limitations of the term African-American as neither an appropriate nor accepted identifier for all people of African descent residing in America. For example, the term inaccurately, and therefore inappropriately, serves as a "catch-all" racial category for significant numbers of African and Caribbean nationals and immigrants studying in the United States. Due to the limitations of available data in Georgia and nationally, it was not possible to draw either parallels or distinctions in the higher educational experiences of Black males based on nationality.



SECTION ONE — CASE STATEMENT

Despite decades of experimentation with measures to achieve educational equity between historically marginalized and privileged groups, not all Americans have benefited equally. In the nearly 60 years since the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KAN.*, all three branches of the federal government have shouldered responsibility for opening pathways to educational opportunity. Certainly, many people of color and women have made gains as a consequence. Yet, stark educational disparities persist and by some measures have worsened.

Gaps in higher educational attainment are stratified by both gender and race. Though gender gaps in achievement exist for nearly all racial and ethnic groups, the widest margin is found between African-American women and men. In 2000, the total national college enrollment among African-American women was 1.5 times greater than the number for African-American men (1,095,000 to 635,000)ⁱ. During this same period, an alarming 14 percentage points — nearly 4 million college-age male students — separated national enrollment rates between African-American and non-Hispanic Caucasian males — 34 and 48 percent respectively.ⁱⁱ

Even Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) — institutions known for successfully producing higher rates of postsecondary success among Black students — have not been immune to the pattern of elevated female enrollment. In fact, the gap has persisted at these institutions over the past 40 years and diverged further in

the last decade. Between 1990 and 2000, an annual average of 50,000 more African-American women than men enrolled in the predominantly Black institutions.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2001, the gender gap between African-American male and female enrollment at HBCUs reached a zenith, as women were 1.5 times more likely than men to enter these historic institutions (177,111 compared to 112,874).^{iv} These findings evidence significant gender gaps in higher educational attainment — a pervasive and persistent national challenge.

Unfortunately, like much of the nation, sizeable race and gender disparities are mirrored in Georgia's public higher education system. In 1999, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia undertook a comprehensive benchmarking study that included the examination of key student performance indicators. The sweeping study quantified widely divergent African-American male enrollment vis-à-vis African-American females and other population groups. The Board of Regents study led to additional research that surfaced race and gender disparities on three other critical measures of student academic performance: *retention rates, graduation rates and number of degrees conferred*. The USG's data on these measures — summarized in the following paragraphs — helped raise awareness and justify action.

Enrollment

In 2001, University System of Georgia (USG) data spotlighted that the number of Black women enrolled at the state's public two- and four-year colleges and universities doubled

that of their same race counterparts (28,000 to 14,000).^v The examination also showed that enrollment rates among the state's non-Hispanic Caucasian males outpaced that of African-American males 45 to 37.5 percent respectively.^{vi} These data help to quantify what is now obvious a decade later on college classrooms in the state and throughout the nation: African-American males are disproportionately absent from college classrooms and they perceive and experience postsecondary education in a manner vastly different than their peers.

Retention

Retention rates among the African-American male students enrolled at University System of Georgia institutions were another significant challenge the system faced. Retention rates among Black male freshmen enrolled for the first time averaged 36 percent between the 2000 and 2004 academic years. It should be noted that the rate improved slightly in 2005.^{vii} By comparison, first-time, freshmen African-American women and Caucasian males each continued to a second year of study at an average annual rate of 50 percent during this period.^{viii} The double-digit gap between Black males and their peers helps explain the significant disparities in graduation rates and degrees conferred.

Graduation Rates

During the first four years of the 21st century, the USG's African-American male student population had lower average annual graduation rates (34 percent) than nearly all other racial/ethnic and gender groups. Only Native American males in the state's system graduated at a lower rate — 32 percent.^{ix} During this same span, Black female students averaged a 45 percent graduation rate.

Associate degree attainment was substantially lower among all racial and ethnic groups than the rate of baccalaureate degrees earned. African-American males earned the two-year degree at rates significantly lower than most other male peers but at a percentage similar to African-American women. These alarming data helped raise awareness and motivate action among stakeholders and leaders throughout the USG.

Degrees Conferred

From 2000 to 2004, a higher percentage of women than men across all racial and ethnic groups earned bachelor's degrees from USG institutions within six years. African-American students' disparate gender outcomes persisted on this measure as well. During this four-year span, Black women earned 7,778 more degrees than their Black male counterparts. Given these enrollment differences, African-American male students would have to make substantial gains to close the double-digit gender gap in graduation rates in the second half of the decade.

Using funds allocated by the Georgia General Assembly in the 2002 legislative session, a seminal research project was developed by the University System of Georgia. The state's resources enabled the launch of the Task Force on Enhancing Access for African-American Males; research on barriers to African-American male participation in the state higher education system; and the creation of a marketing plan and materials. In addition, the allocation financed six pilot efforts on USG campuses that promised to either augment existing or test new promising approaches for engaging, enrolling and graduating Black male students.

SECTION TWO — THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE INITIATIVE: THE EVOLUTION OF AN APPROACH

Since its inception in 2002, AAMI has served as a national model in the higher education community. The data-driven and research-focused process that led to the creation of AAMI and many aspects of the initiative's approach have been adapted by other higher education institutions throughout the country. Major higher education publications have featured the program and peer professionals regularly seek guidance from the AAMI staff. The College Board — the nation's standard bearer for higher education access — has cited AAMI for its progress in closing postsecondary achievement gaps between Black male and female students in the state.^x

Today, the decline in the numbers of male students of all races on college campuses has emerged as a concern that reverberates nationally. The public discourse is characterized by ill-fated suggestions that women's educational attainment portends an impending crisis of American masculinity and a potential reordering of gender norms. Seemingly lost in much of the commentary is a reminder that the struggle for educational equity in America requires unyielding effort to ensure that the promise of Congressional mandates and Supreme Court decisions are realized for all. The USG's AAMI continues in this tradition.

After a decade of operation, AAMI has reached an important developmental juncture that calls for taking stock of lessons learned and outcomes to date. This assessment is intended as

a pre-evaluative tool that can be used by the USG to: elucidate the AAMI model and core design features; understand assumptions about causal relationships between AAMI activities and results; and examine whether and how a formal program evaluation might improve AAMI performance. Building upon lessons from this study, the administrators of the initiative intend to secure the necessary funding and expertise to conduct an independent evaluation of the model.

This writing summarizes several months of intense review of the AAMI. Research for this assessment analyzed USG performance data on student enrollment, retention, progression to graduation and the number of degrees conferred disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender. The system's performance data enabled a quantifiable assessment of the AAMI program theory and results. A comprehensive review of AAMI program literature and publications informed the development of the program theory and logic model. Qualitative methods also were employed to augment understanding of the initiative's operations and culture. While conducting the program assessment, site visits to a dozen AAMI campuses were executed and more than 50 interviews were conducted with faculty, administrators, donors, students, external stakeholders and partners involved with AAMI. The subsequent paragraphs in this section detail the key findings of this study.

AAMI's Program Theory

In 2003, AAMI began operating at six USG campuses as a pilot initiative, with a primary

focus on increasing African-American male student enrollment. Each campus was granted considerable autonomy and modest funds to either design a new program or augment existing efforts in support of the enrollment goal. The funded pilots were required to document and report on the use of funds; the number of males engaged; evaluation and monitoring activities undertaken; and information dissemination activities. Based on research conducted by the task force, each institution developed unique programs with several shared features across the cohort.

Most of the early efforts commonly implemented some variation of five program elements that have developed to form the core identity of many AAMI operations. Site visits to 12 of the 25 AAMI campuses and interviews with program coordinators affirm the following activities as central to advancing AAMI's goals:^{xi}

- *Pipeline strategy*: pre-college program activities targeting African-American males in grades 7-12 — that introduced students to a USG campus and encouraged their desire to attend college.
- *Academic skills enrichment*: supplemental literacy, writing, math and study skill building activities to help prepare pre-college students during the summer or throughout the academic year for enrolled AAMI participants.

- *Student support services*: resources, information and tools to enhance student success academically and socially.
- *Adult & peer mentoring*: connects AAMI students to adults and peers who provide personal and academic guidance and support that aids with acclimating to college, remaining enrolled and progressing toward graduation
- *Leadership development*: is a fundamental tenet of the AAMI, focused on building the competencies and skills of Black males to serve as leaders on and off the college campus.

Although the University System of Georgia's AAMI task force assembled a robust collection of pivotal data and information regarding racial and gender disparities, planning and implementation of AAMI were initiated without explicitly documenting a program theory. Drawing upon the review of program literature, site visits of AAMI campuses and interviews with initiative stakeholders, a description of how AAMI works — *the program theory* — can be implied. Analysis of this information and interactions with AAMI staff and faculty volunteers led to the program theory rendered in **Figure 1** below. Based on this depiction, each AAMI campus would minimally commit to investing the resources and executing the outlined program activities in pursuit of increased retention and graduation targets.

Figure 1: University System of Georgia's African-American Male Initiative Program Theory



It is important to note the assumptions and limitations of the program hypothesis suggested in the figure. First, this representation of how AAMI works assumes that the problems or barriers to improving postsecondary achievement among Black males have been accurately defined. This is an essential concern since misdiagnosis of the core problem could lead implementers to improperly and, ultimately, develop ineffective strategies for removing these barriers. Second, **Figure 1** shows AAMI activities and the desired results but draws no direct relationship between each activity and a corresponding result. Failing to link activities to results, surfaced a second troubling assumption that one or more of the activities is expected to produce the desired results, yet the logic to support this claim has not been expressed. Moreover, it is very difficult to measure and monitor the impact of a specific intervention on the desired outcome if the program model fails to explicitly connect each program activity to a chosen result. Having constrained ability to measure and monitor the impact of an activity renders it unmanageable and hampers continuous program improvement.

The delivery of AAMI core components has become more complex than at the genesis of the initiative. The goals of AAMI — increasing African-American male student enrollment, retention, graduation and the number of degrees conferred upon this population of students at USG institutions — are well defined, measurable and well understood by the campus coordinators engaged during site visits. However, the initiative has matured and spread to more campuses throughout the state in urban, rural and suburban settings. The flexibility of tailoring

AAMI's core elements to each geographic setting, campus culture and student population might be, at once, an asset to the design and a liability to defining, standardizing, measuring and evaluating effective practice.

Given the significant variation in the design of AAMI on campuses, it is premature to assign causal links between the core program elements and the goals of the initiative. This study finds that it is necessary to articulate the initiative's impact theory — “the cause-and-effect” arrangement of program activities intended to realize the desired results.^{xiii} In the next section of the paper, a logic model for AAMI is presented that could provide a point of departure for the closer examination of the impact theory as part of a comprehensive evaluation effort.

AAMI's Logic Model

In 2011, the College Board released a report that summarized its review of literature on effective retention strategies for African-American male college students. The report cites four factors — *a welcoming campus, affirming faculty, supportive peers and engaged mentors* — as central to postsecondary persistence among African-American males.^{xiiii} Indeed, these capacities mirror much of the AAMI approach and the culture it is helping to inculcate on USG campuses. The logic model shown in **Table 1** is one possible representation of an operational plan for primary AAMI activities. It is not an exhaustive ordering of all initiative functions or possible arrangements of those functions. Development of the logic model was informed by the program review, site visits, stakeholder interviews and the program theory drafted for this report.

Logic models can be useful tools for documenting the organization and intended operations of a program. Logic models should be used as a regular point of reference for monitoring program operations and updated as noteworthy shifts occur in either the program design or function. The model in **Table 1** (below) is adaptable as it was drafted to broadly reflect essential program elements common

to most AAMI campuses. Going forward, AAMI administrators may find it worthwhile to request logic models from each AAMI campus. The various entries could be reconciled to update and improve the model included here. In advance of an independent evaluation, the tool also could be used to document variations in AAMI operations and to standardize program practices across the initiative.

Table 1: AAMI’s Logic Model^{xiv}

RESOURCES	ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	RESULTS		
			Short Term	Intermediate	Long Term
AAMI Staff	1) Provide strategic direction for AAMI; and 2) Provide day-to-day management and coordination of AAMI campus activity	Grant and budget funds secured; USG data used for continuous program improvement	The AAMI is sustained and the program attracts participants	The number of private donors supporting AAMI increases by 25 percent; an evaluator is identified for AAMI	The budget for AAMI doubles in five years; an independent evaluation demonstrates the positive effects of AAMI
USG Campus Faculty	Support AAMI student participants through workshops and activities	AAMI students attend class regularly; feel welcome on campus; enjoy campus life and connection with a caring adult	AAMI faculty advisors are retained and their performance is assessed and acknowledged	Paid staff are hired to provide on-site management of AAMI program and support the students	More USG faculty volunteer to support AAMI and other vulnerable students
USG Campus Academic & Student Affairs Operations	Provide academic support, tutoring and educational enrichment to AAMI students	AAMI students attend classes; complete homework; study for exams; excel in classes	Academic affairs is the common administrative location for all AAMI campus programs	More online resources are available to students	The targeted services of AAMI become integrated into the standard operations
Local Community Partners	Mentor AAMI students and provide community service opportunities	AAMI students feel connected to local community life and a caring adult off campus	More mentors emerge to support AAMI students	More mentors and community service opportunities emerge for AAMI students	AAMI campuses and local communities develop permanent collaborations

SECTION THREE — REVIEW OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Review of AAMI program and archival materials, along with in-depth stakeholder interviews, brought to the surface four factors — *system leadership, AAMI staff engagement, institutional infrastructure, and performance-based practice* — that seem critical to the outcomes and progress of the AAMI. Among other assets, these capacities are reported by senior administration faculty and external stakeholders to have a largely positive impact on the participating students and the campuses housing the initiative.

Also worthy of note are the outstanding young men engaged in AAMI. The assessment team met with more than 50 students from 12 campuses in small group settings independent of AAMI faculty. Each was strikingly impressive in his own way; collectively, they commanded positive attention and affirmed the promise of this important initiative. This section reflects on top-level findings from the study and highlights opportunities and challenges that may lie ahead.

System Leadership

From its inception, AAMI has been the beneficiary of individual champions and collective leadership. Altering the culture of the state’s higher education system to become a more welcoming environment for African-American males required transformative leadership. Convincing Black males that the change was genuine demanded parallel leadership from authentic voices. Perhaps the greatest testament to AAMI and the staff leading it is the longevity of the initiative through the tenures of three chancellors and a completely repopulated Board

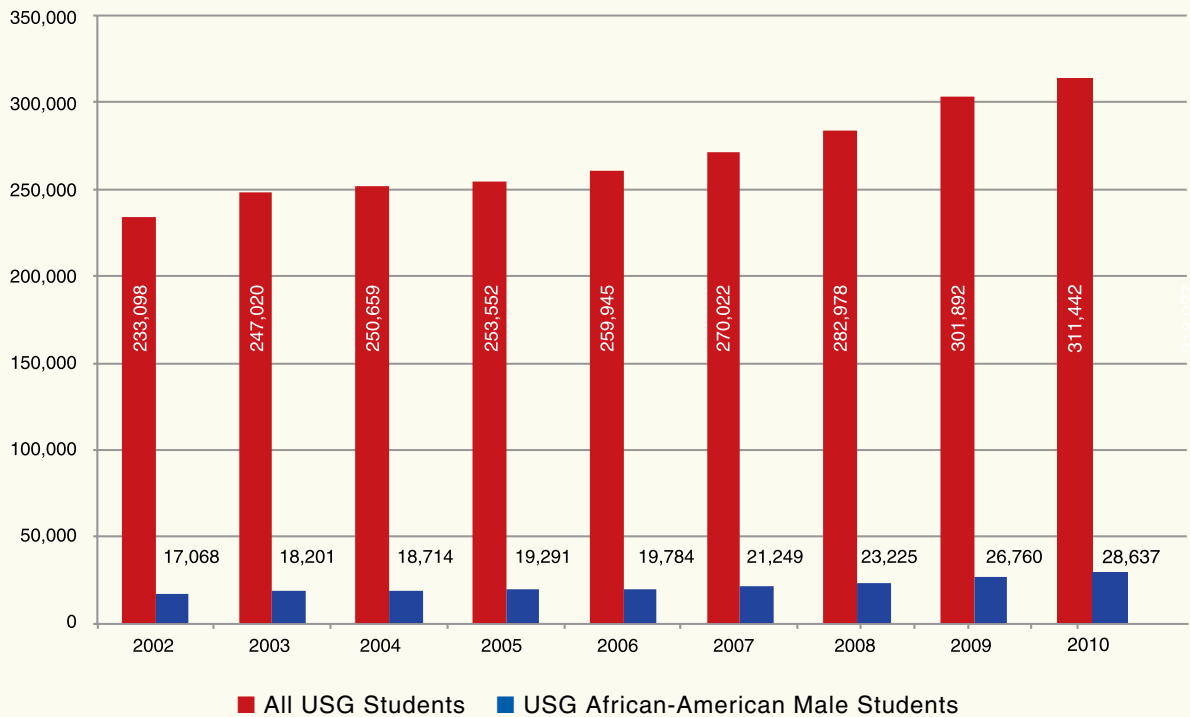
of Regents. Deep leadership at multiple levels of the state’s higher education system seems to be a key takeaway from Georgia’s experience. As similar efforts are crafted to promote educational attainment among males of color and other non-traditional students, identifying the key individuals capable and agreeable to provide consistent leadership will be a critical first task.

AAMI Staff Engagement

As AAMI has broadened its reach to nearly 75 percent of USG campuses, funding to adequately finance scaling the effort has not kept pace. Fiscally savvy and prudent budget management have helped sustain the initiative and steer it through the thick of the recession years — 2008 and 2009. This was a key period for AAMI, as USG Black male student enrollment grew significantly each year following the start of the recession in December 2007 (see **Figure 2, next page**).^{xv} An equally important resource has been the unwavering commitment of AAMI campus coordinators and other faculty members who frequently volunteer their time, talent and, sometimes, treasure. Staff and faculty on USG campuses throughout the state regularly commit personal time in support of the initiative and, as often, lend a helpful hand or wise word of advice to students. The AAMI students interviewed for this study expressed deep gratitude for the support they received from faculty and staff with both academic and personal matters. Several highlighted specific professors and administrators who, in the students’ words, “have gone out of the way” to create an inviting campus and supportive network of caring adults.

Figure 2: University System of Georgia Enrollment, 2002 – 2010

University System of Georgia Enrollment – Annual Increases
 Fall 2002 to Fall 2010
 All USG Students and African-American Males



A majority, though not all, of the faculty and staff coordinating AAMI campus operations are African-American. Many are male and all either volunteer or have effectively integrated AAMI into their primary professional responsibilities. It should be noted that many of the faculty involved with AAMI are paid a stipend or release time. Regardless of their race or gender, the administrators and professors who have committed themselves to AAMI and the students have been tireless in their support. Students corroborate the availability and mentorship of faculty and administrators beyond the campus day and often outside their official job descriptions. AAMI has been fortunate to secure the full buy-in of these individuals. However, due

consideration should be granted to strategies to maintain their engagement and prevent burnout over time.

Institutional Infrastructure

Throughout the USG, AAMI is typically coordinated by administrative staff located in either the office of academic affairs or office of student affairs – each provides an equally stable institutional base. However, this study finds that academic support and enrichment resources are better integrated and more readily available to AAMI students when the initiative is being coordinated through academic affairs. Based on student interviews and a comparative analysis of available resources and services on the 12

campuses visited, students report being more cognizant of and compelled to access tutoring, academic enrichment and study-skills support at campuses where AAMI is administered through the office of academic affairs (or the equivalent) rather than student affairs (or the equivalent).

This assessment also found that several of the larger universities possess additional infrastructure to buttress AAMI operations and to reinforce engaged faculty and staff. Equipped with larger budgets, more staff and engaged alumni networks, these schools are more capable of providing enrichment opportunities for African-American males and other non-traditional students. For example, summer bridge programs — which remain core to several AAMI models — have demonstrated a positive impact with helping non-traditional students successfully transition from high school to college. Summer bridge initiatives can be costly relative to other student support services. Student transitions to college also can be supported through additional strategies such as peer mentoring with upper-class students. For many students, academic success may hinge upon well-staffed tutoring programs, summer bridge experiences or a similar enrichment activity. Such efforts are likely to be unevenly available given resource and infrastructure constraints with public systems.

To ensure an equally high-quality experience for students, AAMI campuses with less-robust budgets and personnel will need to identify creative ways to augment the student services and academic support systems available on campus. At the moment, students are experiencing AAMI at different levels of quality depending

on the maturity of the local effort, available institutional resources, staff commitment and external resources and experiences, among other factors. Like their larger counterparts, two-year and commuter schools are experiencing significant growth in both overall and African-American male student enrollment. In rural and urban settings, campuses may need to cultivate stronger ties with external resources — alumni, individual volunteers, nonprofit and faith based organizations — to offer additional support and enrichment activities that help level the experiences of AAMI participants.

Performance-Based Practice and Measureable Outcomes

The use of metrics has been integral in the evolution of the AAMI from its inception. The Board of Regents and USG senior administrators emphasized the importance of data to illuminating the challenges at the core of race and gender disparities in higher education attainment. Their course of action was continuously informed by research and data to challenge assumptions and develop new strategies as appropriate. The formative research and early pilot projects were held to the common standard of articulating disparities, opportunities, progress and setbacks in quantifiable terms.

AAMI staff at the system and campus level have diligently focused on substantiating their efforts using administrative data to track and document outcomes. There are some inconsistencies among the AAMI campuses' use of data to manage the initiative or make program design changes based on student performance. To some degree, these variations are attributable to the preceding discussion of institutional infrastructure. Nevertheless,

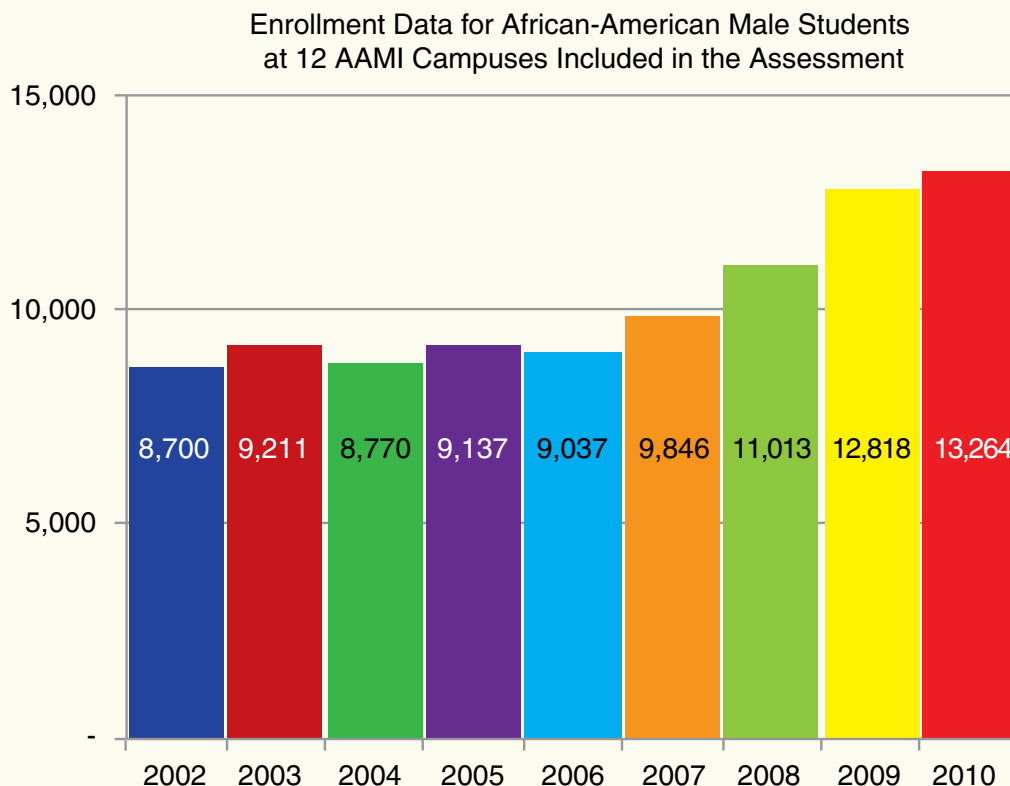
AAMI administrators have steadily employed performance data and consistent measures to inform annual decisions for new and supplemental grants to campuses. In so doing, they have established a formal process for rewarding performance that is consistent with the aims of the initiative. In nearly every dimension of the operation, data and information have been inter-rogated to help ensure student success and the progress of AAMI.

This study finds that the Board of Regents of the University of Georgia’s Office of Research & Policy Analysis’ Student and Information Reporting System (SIRS) has tremendously aided data-driven management of AAMI. The USG research office also manages the Data Warehouse, a publicly accessible online portal

to administrative data on student enrollment, retention, graduation rates and degrees conferred. The latter tool — the Data Warehouse — makes available system data for students, policymakers, researchers and the general public interested in monitoring, studying or simply learning about USG student attainment. The Board of Regents is to be credited with building an enviable data management system that facilitates public accountability with the click of a mouse. Similar higher education efforts might consider adapting this practice.

This appraisal of AAMI notes considerable gains in African-American male rates of enrollment, retention and graduation since 2002, the year AAMI was implemented.

**Figure 3: First-time, Full-time African-American Male Enrollment
Select USG AAMI Campuses, 2002-2010**

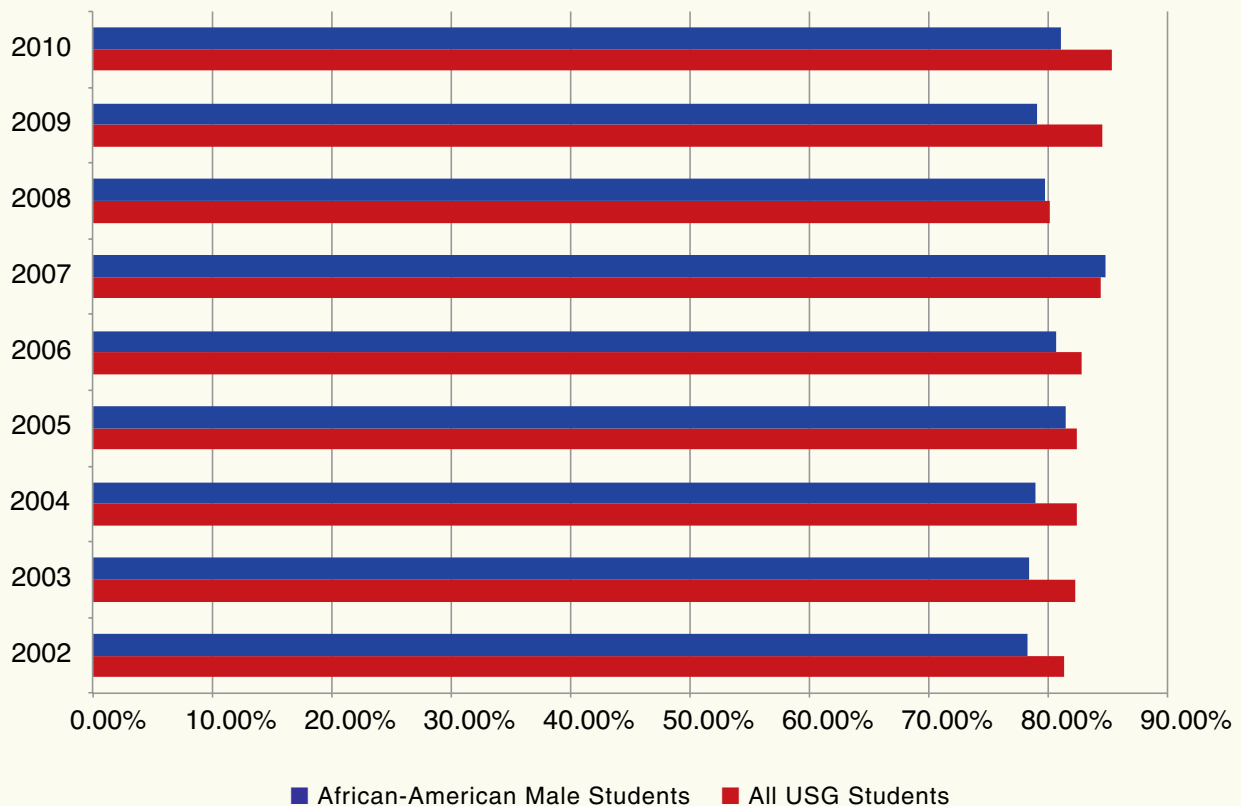


For this analysis of AAMI’s performance, data on student performance was gathered from SIRS and the Data Warehouse and analyzed for the 12 AAMI campuses visited for this study. On the previous page, **Figure 3** aggregates enrollment data for first-time, full-time African-American male freshmen from all 12 schools that were visited. The chart depicts steady increases over the eight-year period and with the largest escalation occurring between 2007 and 2010, coincident with the recent economic recession.

Seven of the 12 institutions included in the study were bachelor degree-granting, four-year institutions. Rates of retention among African-American male students attending these seven schools track closely to that of the larger student body. Beginning in 2002, one-year retention rates are compared for African-American males to other students for a nine-year period depicted below in **Figure 4**. Although retention rates track closely to that of the larger student body at the seven schools, gaps remain. Therefore, considerable effort must be made to erase the disparities between African-American males and their peers.

Figure 4: University System of Georgia Retention Rates, African-American Males and All Students, Fall 2002 to Fall 2010

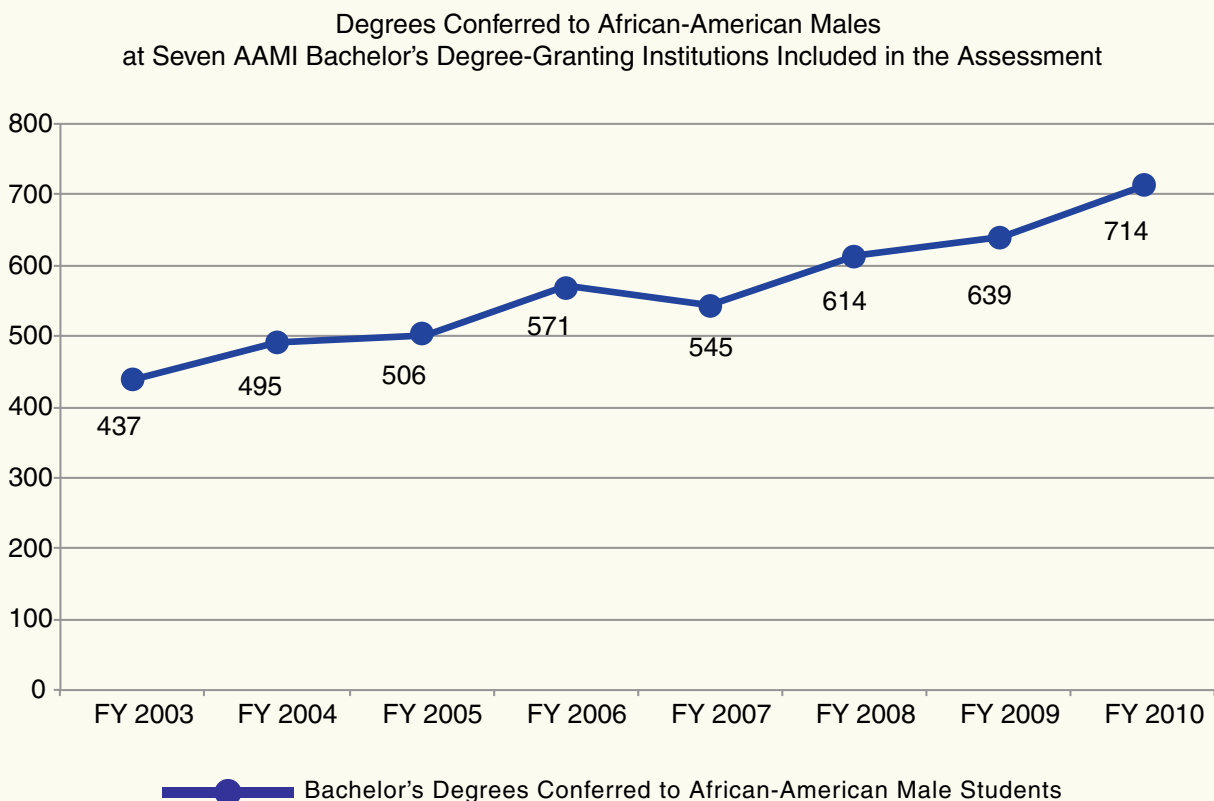
One-Year Retention Rates for African-American Male Students and All Students Enrolled at Seven AAMI Bachelor’s Degree-Granting Institutions Included in the Assessment



The number of degrees conferred to African-American males from the seven bachelor degree-granting institutions has grown since 2002. Aggregate data gathered from the seven schools studied show annual increases in the number of degrees conferred nearly every year between 2002 and 2010. These findings are depicted below in **Figure 5**. The figures suggest a positive trend line for African-American males earning a bachelor’s degree at these institutions. These data also are encouraging for the entire USG and could help justify future additional investments in the AAMI.

Certainly these findings indicate steps in the right direction. However, more rigorous research is needed to attribute these increases directly to AAMI interventions. For example, a system-wide analysis of African-American male student performance that compares trend data from AAMI campuses vis-à-vis those institutions without AAMI could help demonstrate the impact of the initiative on these results. It also might be useful to scientifically isolate the specific AAMI interventions that could be driving these gains to determine the features of the initiative most impactful on enrollment rates, retention rates, student progression and graduation.

**Figure 5: University System of Georgia
Bachelor’s Degrees Conferred to African-American Males,
Select AAMI Institutions, FY 2003-2010**



SECTION FOUR — Implications for Higher Education Policy

There are important implications for higher education policy to be gleaned from the USG’s AAMI model. A summary of the implications for higher education policy is captured in **Table 2** (next page). Incorporated in the table are higher education policy recommendations based on lessons from AAMI’s experiences.

This section also borrows from a set of “principles for policy interventions” advanced by Dr. Pedro Noguera. In the recently released volume titled *“Invisible No More: Understanding the Disenfranchisement of Latino Men and Boys”* the authors offer guidelines for education policymaking focused on improving academic success and other life outcomes for Latino males. The principles found in Dr. Noguera’s book correspond with findings from this assessment of AAMI.



Table 2: Implications for Higher Education Policy and Practice

PRINCIPLES ^{xvi}	AAMI LESSONS	KEY HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Develop holistic policies and practices that broadly address individual development and change educational institutions to meet the needs of students.</p>	<p>AAMI campus coordinators regularly meet with students formally and informally and in groups and individually. Every gathering provides faculty opportunities to gain insights about the students' academic, personal and social wellbeing.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Issue a public declaration acknowledging the importance of a diverse higher education community throughout the USG system and socially market this value to raise awareness of it. 2) Craft institutional policies and practices that mandate and monitor the collection of information on racial, ethnic and gender diversity among the institution's board members, faculty and students. 3) Allocate adequate resources to support full implementation of policy changes.
<p>Define the intended results of policy interventions and use reliable evaluation methods to gather information on progress, setbacks and the changes needed to achieve the goals.</p>	<p>Along with USG leadership, AAMI administrators set clear goals early in the development of the initiative. A system-wide, publicly accessible data management system exists and is used to track progress against the targets. More work is to be done developing evaluation tools and processes to track AAMI impact on program and system goals.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Establish diversity goals at all levels of the institution and assign accountability for managing progress to a senior level administrator, perhaps provost level or the equivalent. 2) Authorize the formation of a diverse panel of faculty, administrators and board members to review information regarding institutional diversity and make recommendations for further improvements at every level. 3) Allocate adequate resources to support full implementation of policy changes.
<p>Craft policy reforms that prioritize the creation of social support systems and offer students a platform for both in-depth individual and group interactions.</p>	<p>Most AAMI campuses have developed on-campus and community based opportunities that allow students to participate in a peer community of male students/ brotherhood, connect with a caring adult mentor or conduct community service.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Assign Student Affairs and Academic Affairs offices the joint task of creating supportive spaces, activities and networks of students and faculty that help students of color and other nontraditional students succeed academically and integrate into the university community. 2) Develop formal feedback loops for students to share experiences and feelings about their acclimation to campus life with appropriate faculty who would be accountable for following up with students experiencing a difficult transition to college. 3) Allocate adequate resources to support full implementation of policy changes.
<p>Devise policy initiatives with sensitivity to the ethnic & cultural differences among Black males.</p>	<p>It is not apparent that AAMI has been created with sufficient attention to the ethnic and cultural differences between Black males from Caribbean and of African and African-American ancestry.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Institute a practice of collecting data on Black student identity that includes their ethnicity. Disaggregate student performance data using ethnic identifiers to determine whether any group of ethnic Black students needs targeted support and engagement.

SECTION FIVE — Opportunities For Philanthropic Engagement

This final section of the report examines opportunities to leverage philanthropic community engagement in support of higher education opportunities such as AAMI. The recommendations offered are informed by a 2011 Grantmakers for Education (GFE) report on funding trends in education grantmaking. GFE is an affinity group comprised of professional grantmakers working to improve educational outcomes and expand learning opportunities. The organization's most recent scan was informed by survey responses from more than 180 philanthropic organizations — two-thirds of the organizations members — to queries about the education grantmaking activities. The GFE study brought to surface five pertinent findings^{xviii}:

- ▶ A majority — 90 percent — of survey respondents reported concern for addressing racial disparities in achievement. A number of these funders are supporting race- and gender-specific initiatives targeting students of color.
- ▶ Education grantmaking tends to be highly place-based. A majority of education grantmaking — 38 percent — is geographically focused in cities or small regions and nearly 25 percent of grants are made in one or two states.
- ▶ Private and family foundations accounted for approximately two-thirds of all 2011 education funding.
- ▶ Postsecondary education is a distant third leading funding area — slightly more than 45 percent of respondents report *some* support for higher education efforts and

just 2 percent exclusively fund postsecondary education. By comparison, 93 percent and 62 percent of respondents indicated support for K-12 education and out-of-school time, respectively.

- ▶ Transition to higher education is a low-level priority for education systems funders — just 20 percent of funders report grantmaking strategies to improve transitions from two- to four-year higher education institutions. This was the lowest funded strategy of grantmakers concerned with aligning education systems.

Relevant findings from the GFE survey suggest a number of openings for leaders in higher education concerned with educational equity to engage the philanthropic sector. Three such opportunities seem particularly timely and could dovetail more established post-secondary efforts already under way such as AAMI or the College Board's focus on minority male achievement. As the GFE survey indicates, a number of national, regional and local private and family foundations already are supporters of educational equity efforts focused on males of color. Building on existing donor engagement, the following efforts could be undertaken in tandem by foundations and post-secondary institutions:

- **Research Conference on Promising and Effective Postsecondary Practices** – The state of knowledge regarding what works to improve achievement among males of color and why these efforts work is quite limited. Building

a more robust, evidence-based compendium of what works for this population will require investment in evaluation of existing models such as AAMI and longitudinal studies of diverse males of color along the education pipeline. Funders could help postsecondary institutions disseminate lessons about promising practices and use this information to build a community of postsecondary education professionals working to test, evaluate and share knowledge about innovations and setbacks. Such a peer community equipped with feedback loops to the broader field could substantially advance effective strategies to close gaps and increase achievement among males of color.

- **Donor Best-Practices Convenings** – A one-year series of learning sessions to share knowledge, practices and resources on promising and effective practices targeted at closing racial, ethnic and gender disparities in postsecondary educational attainment. Participants would include scholars conducting pertinent research, grantmakers concerned with this focus, and postsecondary education administrators and faculty leading initiatives targeting achievement among students of color. Interested donors might pilot these meetings in Georgia given the existence of AAMI — a promising effort already under way with capacity to contribute to the gatherings.

- **Joint Panel on Postsecondary Education Equity** – Nationally, there is ample information and data on racial and gender disparities in postsecondary educational attainment. However, less empirical knowledge exists on the root causes of disparities in academic success, particularly under achievement among males of color. Donors’

interest in closing disparities could be smartly combined with the existing community of scholars positioned to inform and conduct research on this matter. Lessons learned from AAMI, or a similar initiative, could bring significant insights to such a panel and help shape its work and recommendations. This panel could make an important contribution to setting a research agenda that closes knowledge gaps, confirms effective practice and advances post-secondary educational policies and practices that work to close disparities. Panel membership might be comprised of grantmakers, researchers, and post-secondary education policy experts.



SUMMARY

Nearly a decade ago, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia launched an ambitious effort to maximize its claim on the state's intellectual talent. Employing administrative data as its primary tool, the Regents began the process of mining the state's rural countryside and urban cityscapes for previously overlooked human capital and simultaneously sent a clarification call that the educational expectations for African-American males had been elevated. Ten years later, the Regents and staff of the USG's AAMI have proved their point: when afforded opportunity, African-American males and other traditionally marginalized students make important contributions on USG campuses, in the state of Georgia and in society.

Since the launch of AAMI, African-American males attending USG institutions have incrementally realized marked gains in post-secondary achievement. Among the dozen institutions examined for this assessment, data that we evaluated evidence steady increases in African-American male student enrollment over the eight-year period between 2002 and 2010. Also during this timeframe, rates of retention, levels of graduation and the number of degrees conferred all grew among African-American males attending the four-year universities included in this study. Certainly, these findings indicate growth in the right direction. However, more rigorous research is needed to directly attribute USG African-American male post-secondary educational gains to AAMI interventions.

Education, knowledge and skills are tangible forms of hope. This report highlights the disparate levels of educational attainment among African-American males. It also is intended to underscore the promise of institutional leadership and a targeted effort to expand educational opportunity on improving academic outcomes among Black males.

The research findings cited and recommendations offered are but a starting point in examining strategies that will reverse the tide of post-secondary underachievement and unrealized human potential among African-American males. The higher education community can bring to bear substantive expertise and resources to help these young men — and similarly situated groups — find their way to hope and the promise of a better future.



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