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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"



Enhancing Access: 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?????