

## UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT PINE BLUFF QUALITY INITIATIVE

### *“African-American Male Student Persistence Initiative: Leadership Development”*

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the quality initiative is to increase the persistence (retention), graduation, and career and post-baccalaureate placements of African-American male students by engaging them in the types of co-curricular and leadership activities that lead to academic success and timely graduation. Data show that the African-American male student is at high risk, in terms of low retention and graduation rates, as compared to other population groups (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006). The purpose is closely tied to the overall mission of the University which has a rich history of providing educational opportunities to persons from disadvantaged, cultural and diverse academic backgrounds.

#### **Goal**

To get African-American male students actively involved in co-curricular activities that promote leadership skills in order to increase persistence, graduation, and post-baccalaureate placements. Seven specific **ROARING** goals for each student are: **R**etention, **O**rganizational skills, **A**cademic proficiency, **R**esponsibility, **I**ntellectual thinking skills, **N**etworking for success, and **G**oal setting.

#### **Objectives**

- To promote participation in monthly seminars and annual professional conferences.
- To participate in club activities.
- To attend Career Services seminars and workshops.
- To participate in all events of Student Counseling, Assessment and Development.
- To participate in mentorship opportunities.
- To participate in co-curricular activities for students.
- To become involved in service learning projects.
- To involve interested students in the Travel-to-Study Opportunities.

#### **Activities to date**

- Collected data on Fall 2014 Cohort – 239 African-American males enrolled
- Monthly Seminars held
  - *Why Join Student Organizations* – Alexander Watkins, Edlun Marshall, Christopher Jones, and Davion Banks were Guest Speakers
  - *The Importance of Mentorship* – Pastor John Proctor was the Guest Speaker
  - *Shadowing a Professional* – Reginald Cole, Sr., entrepreneur was Guest Speaker
  - *Empowering Males of Color to Graduate College* – Mr. Jason Smedley, founder of NABMU was Guest Speaker
- Assigned peer and professional mentors to African-American males who attended the seminars

- Launched survey to determine student participation in student organizations and other data
- Professional Workshops Attended
  - Dr. Mary Brentley attended Board Meeting for the Foundation for Mid-South in New Orleans, Louisiana to discuss the progress of the Males of Color Initiative
  - Quality Initiative team members: Mrs. Margaret Taylor, Dr. Edmond Buckner, Dr. Mary Brentley, and others attended the Higher Learning Commission National Conference in Chicago, Illinois.
- Analyzed GPAs, retention rates, and enrollment numbers for Fall 2014 (see figure 1.)

**Criteria for Program Participation**

- Membership in a minimum of two (2) co-curricular organizations by the time they have completed 30 credit hours.
- Monthly meetings with assigned mentor.
- Attendance at monthly scheduled workshops and training sessions.
- Cumulative 2.5 GPA (2.00 prior to end of sophomore year).
- Pledge to graduate from college in 4-6 years.

**Outcomes**

- Males of Color reported a Fall 2014 term grade point average (GPA) of 2.50 and a cumulative GPA of 2.59 which includes Summer 2014 course completion. The GPA of this cohort exceeded our established goal of 2.00 for students with less than 30 completed credit hours. Shown below in Table 1 are retention rates and GPA for both male and female students. The University’s historical data show that female students, on average, are retained and achieve at a higher rate than their male counterpart. This initiative is having a positive impact and early results indicate that the gap between the two genders is smaller.

• **Table 1. Fall to Spring Retention and Academic Achievement by Gender**

Gender	Fall 2014	Number Retained Spring 2015	Fall to Spring Retention Rate	Fall 2014 Term GPA	Cum GPA
F	257	230	89.5%	2.80	2.86
M	239	200	83.7%	2.50	2.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>2.66</b>	<b>2.73</b>

- We are now on Social Media – Instagram (males\_of\_color) and twitter (UAPB\_Hlcqualin).