

African American Male Summit

**Coastline Community College
Rose Center, Westminster, CA**

Executive Summary

On March 19, 2008, Coastline Community College in collaboration with The African American Male Education Network and Development (A²MEND) organization proudly presented the first *African American Male Summit* in which close to 350 policy makers, trustees, administrators, faculty, staff and students in high school and community colleges came together to identify solutions to the barriers that African American men face in community colleges today. The mission of the conference is to counteract the dismal forecast of the African American male in higher education, by centrally focusing on the role of the institution. Institutions of higher learning play a pivotal role in the education, leadership, support, and engagement of these students. Dr. Thomas Parham, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Counseling and Health Services and Director of the Counseling Center, at the University of California, Irvine, and Robert McDonald, Member of the California Community College Board of Governors, provided the opening and afternoon keynote addresses, respectively. Over 20 informative presenters and facilitators provided interactive workshops throughout the day that culminated into the development of realistic strategies and concrete recommendations that can be put into practice in our community colleges today.

The Need

The future for African American males is particularly disturbing when one considers the low educational attainment and the lack of social stability of this group in our country. African American males in the K-12 system lead all other groups of students in suspensions, expulsions, behavioral problems and referrals to special cases for slow learners (White & Cones, 1999). In addition, African American adolescent males have a 41 percent homicide rate in California, compared to 14 percent, 5 percent, and 4 percent for Latino, Asian, and White males, respectively (California Legislative Black Caucus, 2006). Further, there are more African American men in prison than in college in California. In 2004, African American males made up 3 percent of the total population in California, 29 percent of the prison population, and only 1 percent of the undergraduate student population in higher education (California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, 2005). Among those enrolled in higher education, African American males remain significantly underrepresented; they are the least likely group to be enrolled in colleges or universities and least likely than African American females to earn a college degree (Bush, 2004; Cuyjet, 1997; Hoffman, Llagas & Snyder, 2003).

Community colleges play a significant role in sustaining and increasing the educational attainment of the American population, particularly for African Americans. The role of California community colleges is most significant to African American higher education in the United States. One of every 14 African Americans who are enrolled in higher education attends a

California community college; moreover, one of every 7 African American community college students in the country is enrolled in California (Anomymous, 2007). More specifically, of the 1.2 percent of all African American males enrolled in public, postsecondary institutions in California, 82 percent are enrolled in the California Community College system (Community College League of California, 2004). Clearly, a large proportion of African American males in California use community colleges as their primary means to seek access to higher education and to pursue career opportunities by earning a degree, transferring to a four-year institution, and eventually entering the work force to earn a higher salary; therefore, the educational success of African American males in community colleges is critical to enhancing their socio-economic status, not only in California, but across the country.

Disturbingly, African Americans, particularly men, are being left behind, severely lacking educational attainment, which inhibits social mobility and economic achievement. Although this is not a recent phenomenon, it has continued to be a persistent problem that has not yet been successfully resolved. Recent studies demonstrate that African Americans earn the fewest degrees and transfer at lower rates to four-year institutions than any other major ethnic group in the California community college system (Bush, 2004; Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2003). Whites earn six times as many associate's degrees compared with African Americans, Latinos earn nearly three times as many, and Asians and Filipinos earn twice as many (Allen, Bonous-Hammarth, & Teranishi, 2002). This gap in educational access and attainment for African Americans has a profound impact on the group's opportunity to succeed in society.

A recent report, titled "Rules of the Game" from the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy finds that the vast majority of African American students, who enter community college in California seeking a degree, are not completing their course of study (Shulock & Moore, 2007). More specifically, this study found only 15% of African American students, compared to 18% of Latino, 27% of White, and 33% of Asian students, earned a certificate or degree, transferred to a four-year university, or achieved some combination of those outcomes within six years of enrolling in a California Community College (Shulock & Moore, 2007). A similar study found that African American men in comparison to other ethnic and gender subgroups are disproportionately underachieving in all segments of academic outcomes in California community colleges (Bush, 2004). The study further asserted that African American men throughout California's community college system are the lowest performing subgroup when one considers: percentage of degrees earned, persistence rates, and average cumulative grade point average (Bush, 2004).

Although community colleges are open access institutions, provide quality, affordable education, and serve as a catalyst for African American males who might not otherwise pursue a college education; community colleges appear to be failing African American males. These findings suggest that California community colleges need to develop interventions that would appropriately reduce the racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in student success, persistence and achievement. In considering the large proportion of African American males who enroll in California community colleges, their success is of the utmost importance. To respond effectively to these challenges, community colleges need to better understand the experiences of African American males in order to develop more effective strategies to enhance their educational outcomes and academic success.

Strategies and Implementation Plan

During the conference, workshop sessions were offered in four strands: Administrative strand, Faculty/Instruction strand, Student Services/Support Staff strand, and Student Stand. Two questions served as the major focus for the participants in each strand: 1) What should community colleges do to increase the success of African American male students? 2) What can you do immediately to increase the success of African American male students in community colleges? Below are the responses (unedited) to these questions, in no particular order, from the participants in each strand.

1) What should community colleges do to increase the success of African American male students?

Faculty

- Think about what is done outside of the classroom as well as in the classroom
- Have a cognitive approach- right brain/left brain
- Take a look at delivery as well as subject matter
- Point out the relevancy of the content and make students feel special
- Connect with the student, show your personality
- Use active learning strategies, think outside of the box
- Mathematical quest
- Kinesthetic learning and group work
- Peer responsibility for assignment completion
- Mirroring- allowing students to connect with characters
- Emotional intelligence
- Use grouping correctly, not just clustering
- Incorporate Hip-Hop culture in the class
- Show the love and enthusiasm
- Make an effort to make a difference
- Request time with other department to discuss working with diverse students

Administrators

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Student Services

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Students

- Increase financial aid; make college more affordable; have timely disbursements of financial aid checks
- Job opportunities on campus; more work study opportunities
- More programs like this summit/focus on the success of African American males
- More role models in the colleges
- More mentor programs on campus
- More personable & engaging faculty; develop more interesting courses
- Better tutoring programs
- Mandatory orientations for new students

- Help students to learn to communicate better
- Provide programs that are social & entertaining to capture our attention, but provide an educational component
- Provide opportunities for students raise money for scholarships
- More support for student athletes
- Hire more African Americans in leadership positions and connect with alumni
- Better communication with students; outreach and publicize resources and services
- Provide Dorms/Residence Halls to help with commute
- Provide Awards/Recognition/Incentives for students who do well
- Hold faculty accountable when they are unprofessional
- More programs that interest students; ask us what we want
- Provide workshops for success/professional preparation/leadership
- Help students learn language better, similar to ESL language classes

2) What can you do immediately to increase the success of African American male students?

Faculty

- Make more of an effort to relate academics to everyday life
- Connect with counseling client
- Take activities and apply to all students
- Incorporate culture into the classroom
- Ask students to present at faculty meetings
- Make an effort to learn about students' culture
- Establish expectation for both students and instruction; establish group work roles
- Meet with Terrance Elliott to develop a class
- Start orientation, first year experience.
- Look into Talib Kwali, Mos Def, and Common

Administrators

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Student Services

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Students

- Take educational responsibility; value your opportunities; make your mind up and know what you want to accomplish, then strive for it
- Ask your professors for help/assistance/tutoring
- Be prepared for class; stay organized; maintain a to do list
- Be patient and persistent with school; know that it will take time
- Have an educational mindset; stay focused
- Change the failure mentality; strive for success
- Apply yourself; stick to what you want to do
- More belief in ourselves and stop being lazy about getting things done
- Have a personal plan; have goals; hold yourself accountable

- Develop good study habits
- Attend motivational programs
- Sit in the front of the classrooms
- Get involved in class; participate in discussions and ask questions
- Take advantage of resources and services available in school
- Avoid stereotypes; don't buy into it; use it to motivate yourself; to prove them wrong

The African American Male Educational Network and Development (A²MEND) organization would like to thank all of our dynamic workshop presenters and facilitators. We would also like to thank our partners for sponsoring the African American Male Summit: Coastline Community College, University of Phoenix, Argosy University, Southern California Edison, Contra Costa CCD, Dr. Henry Shannon, Orange County Black Chamber of Commerce, Scantron, and SARS Grid.

The African American Male Educational Network and Development (A²MEND) organization is comprised of African American male administrators who utilize their scholarly and professional expertise and position to foster institutional change within the community college system. We aim to create an affirming academic and professional environment for African Americans with a particular focus on African American male students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

For more information, visit our website: www.a2mend.org

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