AAKC Fall 2014 Best Practices Spotlight

Title/Focus Area: Minority Male Engagement-Men of Color Engagement Initiatives at UNC Chapel Hill

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NASPA Region: III

Institution: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Best Practices Overview:

A group of primarily African American male students added their voice to the 2013-14 academic year national collegiate student of color YouTube protest video movement by releasing “The UNC Minority Experience” in April 2014. After meeting with senior administrators over the summer, the young men started the student group UNC Representatives Increasing Student Excellence (R.I.S.E.). I serve as the organization’s advisor, and their three-pronged approach includes an alumni speaker series, an 8th-9th grade outreach effort to prepare African American males for admission into selective universities/colleges, and a minority peer study group. Thanks to Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Dr. Bettina Shuford, a few R.I.S.E. members attended the inaugural “I, Too, Am Harvard: The Blacktivism Conference” at Harvard University in October 2014. R.I.S.E. is also a part of a minority male engagement undergraduate student group coalition that I convene.

Under the leadership of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Winston Crisp, rising sophomore and junior underrepresented males of color were offered a 4 day/3 night summer excursion to Washington D.C. in early August 2014. The students finished common reads prior to the trip that the group critically engaged during the experience, visited museums/historical sites, met local alumni, completed two service projects, and connected with other male students. Our website can be found at minoritymales.web.unc.edu, which was created and being maintained by current undergraduate

Measures of Success:

The student group UNC R.I.S.E. joined with College of Arts & Sciences Academic Advisor Dexter Robinson to provide avenues for currently enrolled students of color to interact with Carolina alumni of color
through a regular speaker series. The aim is for students to utilize the network of alum to their advantage for internships, first destination experiences after graduation, and long-term career planning. Partnering with Carolina Higher Education Opportunity Programs Upward Bound Academic Advisor Donovan Livingston, the students will serve as mentors for 8th and 9th grade males and will track their participation in pre-college programs that will lead to successful application, admittance, and graduation from selective universities/colleges. Collaborating with currently enrolled graduate/professional students of color, the minority peer study group will address promoting help-seeking behavior for undergraduate students of color (with an emphasis on African American male students) to maximize performance in their current courses.

Upon completion of the summer excursion, each cohort presents to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and the trip grantor about how the experience has impacted them. The group members are tracked by the staff leaders of the excursion for academic, social/emotional, and professional success. The students will also serve as ambassadors for the next cadre selected to travel to a new location the following summer.