



Task Force on
The City University of New York
Black Male Initiative

Final Report to the Chancellor

September 12, 2005



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Final Report of The City University of New York Task Force on the Black Male Initiative

Executive Summary

In May of 2004, the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York unanimously approved its Master Plan 2004-2008. This comprehensive planning document included for the first time in the University's history a "Chancellor's Initiative on the Black Male in Education" which stated, in particular, "It is a well-established fact that institutions of higher education in the U.S. do not successfully recruit, retain and graduate young African-American and Caribbean men. Myriad statistics discuss the disproportionately low percentages and numbers of young black men within higher education, public higher education and even at CUNY. Over the next four years, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein will oversee the development and implementation of a new University-wide program aimed at implementing some of the most effective practices in this area."

The Plan cited various promising models at CUNY, including the Male Development and Empowerment Center at Medgar Evers College and initiatives at the University level, including the CUNY Prep Transitional High School. It concluded this section by calling for the creation of opportunities for young men and women to achieve and engage themselves in the world, giving them the skills and confidence needed to function effectively in a society in which too little is expected of them and too many opportunities denied them.

In the fall of 2004, Chancellor Goldstein established a University Task Force on the Black Male Initiative. He asked Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Selma Botman to identify faculty members and administrators with relevant knowledge and expertise to serve on the Task Force. The Chancellor also invited President Gregory Williams of City College and Trustee Valerie Lancaster Beal to serve as co-chairs. Campus representatives were selected on the basis of their proven knowledge and expertise in matters related to the Task Force's charge. In addition to serving on the Task Force, they were asked to serve as Directors of Working Groups that would examine distinctive issues and present recommendations to the Task Force.

The Task Force was charged with developing recommendations that would include a series of action-oriented projects to help black males overcome the inequalities that lead to poor academic performance in the K-12 system, the attendant weak enrollment, retention, and graduation from institutions of higher education, and high rates of joblessness and incarceration.

The Task Force met throughout the spring 2005 semester. Working Group Directors also met independently with their group members to address their respective areas. The Task Force was presented with convincing evidence that black males in New York City face patterns of ongoing and distinctive discrimination in many aspects of their lives—most evidently in education, in treatment by the criminal justice system, and in employment.

The discrimination they face has profound consequences for their well-being and security and is manifested in unacceptably high rates of leaving school before high school graduation and imprisonment and unacceptably low rates of postsecondary degree completion and stable participation in the work force. These grim realities have adverse impacts on family members and communities.

The recommendations of the Task Force are summarized below. Additional recommendations developed by the Working Groups are included in their reports, which are appended.

Recommendation #1: Establish Strong University Leadership

The City University of New York has a public responsibility to provide critical leadership on the challenges facing black youth and men, and to raise its voice vigorously and unwaveringly to help mobilize efforts to achieve long overdue educational and social equity on their behalf.

Recommendation #2: Improve Access to Higher Education

CUNY must strengthen the school-to-college pipeline to enable many more black male students to move into higher education.

Recommendation #3: Increase Admission and Graduation Rates at CUNY Colleges

Each campus should develop and implement a comprehensive plan to improve the enrollment and graduation rates of black males. The University should implement an enrollment management plan. In order to envision themselves as being successful in college, prospective and matriculated black male students must see role models of successful black male faculty and staff in the college community. Campuses must be more deliberate in their recruitment of qualified black males for all professional positions—at all levels of the professorate, from assistant professors to Distinguished Professors and at all administrative levels. Likewise, each campus and the central administration must insure that qualified black males are represented and visible in positions of leadership and responsibility.

Recommendation #4: Educate a New Generation of K-12 Teachers

The University is creating a Teacher Academy that will be launched in September 2006 as a new model of teacher education that prepares professionals for urban education. The Academy should include an initiative that provides incentives to promising black males to attend CUNY, enroll in the Academy, and train as teachers. CUNY continues to be a main supplier of teachers to the New York City public schools, and efforts should be made to insure that the faculty and staff of all of the University's teacher preparation programs understand, respect, and utilize pedagogies that are responsive to the distinctive experiences of black males.

Recommendation #5: Use the University's Resources to Improve Employment Prospects of Black Males

The University should develop a set of intermediate employment strategies to increase the likelihood that black males obtain credentials and secure employment.

Recommendation #6: Develop Ways to Contribute to the Reduction of the Incarceration Rate for Black Males

The University should develop and implement a project that enrolls adolescents and young adults in specially designed alternatives to incarceration as well as post-incarceration programs at the CUNY colleges.

Recommendation #7: Establish an Institute for the Achievement of Educational and Social Equity for Black Males

The University should establish an Institute for the Achievement of Educational and Social Equity for Black Males to insure that the University's intellectual and organizational resources are marshaled to address the issues that this Task Force has been investigating.

Recommendation #8: Involve Experts in the Implementation of these Recommendations

Small groups of experts should be identified for each of the proposed recommendations, and charged with developing individual implementation plans that are informed by research and demonstrated by successful practice. The groups should offer the plans to the Task Force members for review. In light of that recommendation, the University Task Force on the Black Male Initiative should remain active for at least one year beyond the issuance of this report.

Recommendation #9: Establish Benchmarks

The Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs should develop a set of specific benchmarks that can be used to evaluate the University's progress in implementing the Task Force's recommendations and, most important, in achieving the goals it believes are essential. Those benchmarks should be incorporated within the University's Performance Management Plan.