



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

PROPOSAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL

APPENDIX F

The CUNY Black Male Initiative Request to City Council

Introduction

The University is pleased to submit this proposal to the City Council. The proposal is intended to allow the University to launch several University-wide projects that are, in many ways, the outgrowth of the work of the Chancellor's Task Force on the Black Male Initiative and, as a complementary effort, to strengthen and expand the work of the recently established Male Development and Empowerment Center at Medgar Evers College. The Task Force was convened in the early part of 2005 and is now preparing its final report and recommendations for the Chancellor. Its work has focused on the essential issues of educational achievement, incarceration and post-incarceration, employment and inter-personal relationships. The College's Center was established in September of 2003 to address the academic, psycho-social, and cultural needs expressed by African American, Hispanic, and Caribbean male students enrolled at Medgar Evers College.

University-Wide Projects

The projects discussed below will target black males in New York City. However, the programs will be open to all men who can benefit from them

Graduation Initiative

The University proposes to allocate funds for a competitive process that will result in five colleges being awarded grants. Each campus will develop and implement a coordinated effort to recruit more black males from selected areas of the city into undergraduate degree programs and significantly increase the number of black males who make continuous satisfactory progress towards degree completion. Funds will be used to support at least one full-time staff member on each campus, to employ successful students as peer mentors, and to organize appropriate special events. Campuses will be expected to supplement the award with existing resources to strengthen the project.

Each interested campus will be required to include baseline data on enrollment, persistence, and graduation numbers for targeted black male students for the previous three years and to set specific targets for increases in each category. The ambition of the targets and the likely effectiveness of the proposed plan will be the major criteria used in selecting the five colleges. All five colleges will be required to submit interim and final reports on their activities and progress towards meeting the targets. Like other universities throughout the country, CUNY is troubled by the high attrition rates of its black male students and seeks to address the situation through a coordinated campus-based initiative.

Oversight and coordination for this initiative will be provided by the Office of Academic Affairs.

Teacher Initiative

The University will allocate funds to launch a recruitment initiative in targeted city high schools to encourage promising black male students to enroll as members of a cohort in the University's new Teacher Academy in the fall of 2006. The funding will allow for a full-time staff member to be assigned to the project and to enable the University to produce materials and conduct a wide range of activities and events.

The effort will also directly involve teacher education and collaborative programs staff from the Office of Academic Affairs and the University's Office of Admissions Services-in close cooperation with the human resources staff at the Department of Education.

Recruitment activities will include the preparation and distribution of special publications, outreach to college advisors in high schools, borough-wide career fairs, small group discussions at selected high schools, visits to campuses, special receptions at Department of Education facilities, individual counseling sessions, the provision of application fee waivers, and on-going telephone and e-mail contact with students and parents/guardians.

The University proposes to engage at least five hundred high school students and members of their families in substantial recruitment activities. It will maintain data on all participants, including information on their Teacher Academy application, admission and acceptance. The results of the first year's effort will be used to establish baseline data and to set admission and acceptance targets for subsequent years.

Post-Incarceration Initiative

The University will allocate funds to various CUNY colleges to develop and implement a project that will enroll adolescents and young adults in specially designed post-incarceration programs. The funding will enable the University to employ four full-time staff members to do outreach and follow-up, to maintain contact with adjudicating agencies and the public schools, and to organize all of the campus-based activities. In addition, funds will be available to reimburse faculty members who will be directly involved in the project's design and implementation. Funds will also be used to provide transportation and food to all participants.

The colleges will work with criminal and juvenile justice agencies to help clients, where appropriate, access the opportunities for higher education in the CUNY system. This post-incarceration program will employ staff to work across two separate systems, the criminal justice system and the CUNY system to increase access. Staff would work with counselors, educators and other service providers to explain the workings of the CUNY community and senior colleges so that, as their clients get GEDs or complete high school, CUNY can be a stabilizing resource and advancement opportunity.

Transition to College Initiative

The University will allocate funds to CUNY Prep to further develop its work with high school dropouts who, after passing the GED Tests, enroll at CUNY colleges. The program will continue to provide those students with academic and personal supports throughout the first year in college. In addition, the funding will enable the program to employ a part-time evaluator who will document all program activities, interview participants and college staff to identify essential aspects of transitional programs. The resulting report will be disseminated widely to youth-serving agencies and to college staffs.

The program will place at least two cohorts of students in community colleges. Data will be collected and maintained on student registrations, course completions, credit accumulation, grades and retention. An interim and final report will be prepared.

Medgar Evers College Male Development and Empowerment Center

The Center guides students through elementary and secondary schools into higher education; assists students in developing an ardent desire for life-long intellectual growth and personal development, as a component of their self-actualization; inculcates an understanding and appreciation of their place in history and of their responsibility as role models for their community; and, develops the leadership skills necessary to take on the role of change-agent in their respective communities.

By building on College-wide initiatives and programs, the Center seeks to implement a systematic approach that addresses the causes of male educational underachievement, and not simply the symptoms. Because dis-identification with educational goals occurs relatively early – sometimes as early as the third or fourth grades - and may have life-long reverberations, the Center has created a holistic approach that delivers intentional interventions throughout the lifespan of a typical urban male.

While no single program or approach can provide a global solution to this endemic problem of under-enrollment, after reviewing the pertinent literature and research, the Center has identified the following areas as consistently linked to strategies supporting minority male success and academic achievement:

Academic Enrichment

In recognizing that entering students are likely to have experienced inappropriate or insufficient education, the Center has responded by implementing a comprehensive array of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs and services. These services have been created in collaboration with both the Post Secondary Readiness Center and the Learning Center. The Center will create small, all male peer tutorial groups and promote the development of strong personal relationships between black male students and members of the faculty.

Other strategies include developing a recognizable profile of the “Medgar Man” through establishing an annual “Medgar Man” Academic Achievement Award. This will celebrate and acknowledge those outstanding males whose efforts embody the mission of the Center.

Mentoring

The Center will design a mentoring program that is responsive to the socially and culturally specific needs of our male students, thus ensuring that the mentoring relationship is sustainable, is seen as relevant by both parties, and serves to foster achievement and success, both in school and in the workplace.

We will recruit individuals who can make a significant time commitment to serve as mentors either to individuals, or to a group of students. In addition, we will bring in a cadre of trainers to develop mentoring workshops for our faculty and administration, thus expanding the roster of effective mentors and heightening the possibilities of a “natural” mentoring match between students and college personnel.

Because many of our students are drawn from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, they have had limited exposure to possible career options. More significantly, they have limited opportunities within their neighborhoods to learn how to map their educational and career paths in order to fully maximize their talents and interests. By recruiting mentors from different professions, we will provide opportunities for students to understand what path their mentor followed in gaining success. In turn, the mentor will identify and support mentee predispositions, skills, and abilities, while identifying other areas that may need development for the mentee to achieve career success. More importantly, the mentor can develop mentee self-confidence by sharing strategies for overcoming adversities, and understanding that success often builds upon failure.

Leadership Development

Leadership development can be described as the acquisition of skills and experiences in order to understand a community and its objectives, thus enabling a person to provide advice and guidance to that community, to support it in achieving its objectives, and to serve as an example for the community, including, when necessary, acting on the community's behalf. Because leadership development is a process, it must be carried out over an extended period of time. Not only must leaders know how to lead, they must have experience leading. By doing so, leaders acquire new skills, make new changes in the community, and reaffirm their commitment to themselves, their community, and their future.

The Center proposes to develop curriculum workshops paralleling those currently in place in the School of Business in order to ensure that students master the basic body of knowledge associated with leadership. Focus areas may vary, but would include technical areas such as conducting an effective meeting, preparing a budget, and building a

coalition, as well as conceptual areas such as culture and history, self-esteem and confidence, and leadership styles. In addition, the Center will promote community service and civic engagement by establishing the MEC Male Community Empowerment Group, thus providing leadership opportunities for students within the community.

Non-violent Conflict Resolution

Both family and community play a major role in violence prevention. The Center's working definition of non-violent conflict resolution is that conflict resolution is the process of dealing with interpersonal conflicts so that anger and misunderstanding do not escalate into violence, and that creating strategies that work must include the cultivation of self-appreciation and positive relationships with others.

Peer group workshops provide a safe, supportive social environment where males can practice new behaviors with their peers. One goal of workshop activities is to understand how conflict resolution skills can be used in their individual roles as student, friend, family member, parent, worker, and citizen. A combination of critical thinking and practice in new approaches can improve positive responses while simultaneously decreasing factors that feed into creating conflict.

The Center will address the media and societal constructions of "male" behavior that may prevent positive approaches to conflict resolution. The Center will offer a range of opportunities to demonstrate ability, whether it is in academics, arts, athletics, or other areas. By supporting peer groups and creating opportunities to share life experiences, the Center hopes to create a "critical mass" of successful students, so that success is seen as integral – and not in opposition – to one's racial or ethnic identity.

Workshops and discussion groups will address affiliated issues such as ambivalence regarding success, fear of loss of community as one moves up the socio-economic ladder; and methods to counteract racist behaviors.

Assessment instruments to determine the impact of the Center's strategies will include, but are not limited to: The Neighborhood Assessment of Community Characteristics; Personal Attributes Questionnaire; Life Satisfaction Scale, and The Multi Dimensional Model of Racial Identity. Pre-and post-test results will be analyzed. In addition, focus groups and surveys will be conducted.

Dissemination

The Center will host an annual conference to develop and share effective strategies that promote the development and empowerment of urban males. Local, regional, national, and international speakers will present their experiences and research in these areas. Proceedings will be published for distribution. The Center will also create and maintain a website that will serve as an avenue of outreach, information dissemination, and advocacy.

Summary

The University believes that the proposed projects will enable it to rise to an important challenge and to make a direct contribution to the promotion of the academic achievement and the personal/social growth of many hundreds of black men. The University recognizes that something must be done and intends to prove that something effective can be done.