

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

Introduction

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.

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.

Some might ask: "Why a Black Male Initiative and why at CUNY?" These are important and appropriate questions. The facts of life for black males are not only alarming but also unconscionable in 21st century America. According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education, in 2000-01, the four-year high school graduation rate for black males in New York City was 31%. The nationwide college graduation rate for black men in 2003 was 34%, according to *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. New York City census data for 2000 indicates that only 55.2% of black males aged 16-64 had jobs. New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services reports that, in 2003, the arrest rate

for black males per 100,000 was 18,575, in contrast to white males at 4,480 and Hispanic males at 7,607¹. Many theories have been advanced to explain these chilling numbers—some historic while others contemporary. Theorists have pointed to the legacy and deleterious effects of slavery; pervasive racism; white male privilege; the absence of role models; absentee fathers; the temptation of criminal life; and the glorification of the gangster/bad-boy image: even hip-hop music has been considered a factor.

Popular culture has created a stereotypical image of the black man that conflates both fact and fiction. Society's generally negative perception of black males has profound consequences, shaping their self-perception from an early age and to varying degrees, limiting their potential to maintain fulfilling lives. For black men to reclaim their identities and strip away the mythology surrounding them, education *must* become key. Education plants the seeds necessary for personal as well as social transformation.

Increased access to higher education is critical for black males. Access to an education at a CUNY campus, for those in New York City, is an imperative. CUNY's mission, to provide equal access and opportunity for *all* its current and prospective students, is consistent with the philosophy that education is a means to advancement. In fact, CUNY's history situates the University as the place that has offered hundreds of thousands of students the chance to pursue academic and professional dreams, so that they can create successful futures for themselves and their families. CUNY recognizes its obligation to the citizens of New York and it takes that responsibility seriously. CUNY plays a critical role in the community by connecting faculty research to the public's needs, participating in policy discussions, stimulating economic and workforce development, and encouraging community engagement. The University also considers its educational mandate essential to the vibrancy and success of the city. But before students take the step of matriculating at any of the CUNY campuses, they must first be able to dream that possibility.

Dreaming has not been easy. Even after slavery ended, systemic inequality remained. Between 1865 and 1868, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments were signed into law. Thirty years later, in 1896, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" was constitutional, and legally sanctioned race-based segregation became the law of the land. It would be another 56 years before the Supreme Court, in the *Brown* decision, would strike down its earlier ruling, acknowledging the unconstitutionality of the separate but equal doctrine. Moreover, it would not be until 1965, 100 years after the voting rights promise was first made, that full voting rights were legislatively guaranteed. Forty years later, the damaging effects of centuries of negative policies are still evident, particularly in the lives of black males.

The Chancellor's Black Male Initiative, one of the four major initiatives included in the University's Master Plan for 2004-2008, is a bold call to action and an opportunity for CUNY to focus directly on an important segment of its student population. This focus will cause the University to examine its own practices, and to designate the areas where

¹ Walter Stafford and Diana Salas, "The State of African American Males in New York City," New York: Wagner School of Public Service, 2005, 9.

improvements are necessary. It will also seek to influence broader areas of policy that affect the lives of black male children and adults.

Task Force Members

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 representatives and their areas of expertise are noted below:

- Joyce Coppin, Distinguished Lecturer, The City College of New York (K-12 Education)
- William Cross, Professor, Psychology and Urban Education and Head of the Doctoral Program in Social-Personality Psychology, CUNY Graduate School (Social Relations)
- Brenda Greene, Professor of English and Director of the Center for Black Literature, Medgar Evers College (Higher Education)
- John Mollenkopf, Distinguished Professor, Political Science and Sociology, CUNY Graduate School (Employment)
- Jeremy Travis, President, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (Criminal Justice).

In addition to Executive Vice Chancellor Botman, Task Force members from the University's Central Office included:

- Otis Hill, Vice Chancellor for Student Development and Enrollment Management
- John Mogulescu, Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs and Dean of the School of Professional Studies
- John Garvey, University Associate Dean for Collaborative Programs
- Deborah Douglass, University Director for Education and Training Opportunity Programs.

President Edison Jackson of Medgar Evers College and President Carolyn Williams of Bronx Community College served as advisors to the Task Force.

Task Force Process

The Task Force met throughout the spring 2005 semester. The Working Group Directors also met independently with their group members to address their respective areas. The Directors convened subcommittees comprising scholars from both within and outside of the University, community activists, public education officials, experts in relevant fields, and others, whom they met with in person and/or communicated with by telephone, or via e-mail or written correspondence. Each selected a different combination of activities in carrying out the group's charge:

- The Pre-Kindergarten to Grade Twelve Working Group held internal discussions with its members, talked with colleagues on CUNY campuses, and consulted with staff associated with school improvement and academic intervention programs for students in the New York City public schools.
- The Higher Education Working Group reviewed programs and practices of successful recruitment and retention programs for black males throughout the nation, conducted focus groups with black male college students, community residents, and high school and college dropouts, and conducted a literature review of relevant research.
- The Employment Working Group surveyed literature on employment in New York City with particular attention to employment among black males, convened a focus group of experts, and interviewed those with expertise in the field.
- The Social Relations Working Group focused on socio-emotional, attitudinal, and identity factors. The Director solicited advice from experts on what the broader task force should seek to accomplish, and what it should avoid in order for any intervention to be successful.
- Finally, the Criminal Justice Working Group compiled data demonstrating racial disparities in crime rates, victimization rates, juvenile justice, incarceration, and other criminal justice phenomena. The group also convened an ad hoc committee of faculty, students, and staff to discuss challenges facing black men on the John Jay campus, with the goal of laying the groundwork for an initiative that the University would launch as an outgrowth of the work of the Task Force.

Detailed descriptions of activities conducted by each of the Working Groups are included in their individual final reports, which are appended.

To the extent that his schedule permitted, Chancellor Goldstein attended the Task Force meetings and was kept apprised of the Task Force’s activities. He encouraged the Task Force to situate the University as a “national voice” on the plight of black males and to create action-oriented strategies that would have long-term impact in improving the chances of black males to lead successful lives. These objectives profoundly shaped the deliberations of the Task Force members, the content of Working Group final reports, and the development of this report.

The initial meetings of the Task Force consisted of discussions based on data and research. David Crook, University Dean for Institutional Research and Assessment, compared the achievement of black and white males with all students at the CUNY campuses, at other public universities, and at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Presentations also included reviews of programs serving elementary, middle, and high school students, and critiques of CUNY programs that recruit, retain, and graduate students as well as comparable activities at other institutions of higher education. Subsequent meetings included oral and written presentations and progress reports by the Working Group Directors and vigorous discussion and debate on how the University might best effect long-term, positive changes in the lives of black males in New York City.

As the Task Force members reviewed the material presented and discussed its implications, it became increasingly clear that their recommendations would focus on several key issues affecting black males: improving education in the public schools, ensuring more robust admissions and higher graduation rates at CUNY colleges, improving labor market participation, and reducing imprisonment and recidivism.

The findings and recommendations that follow represent an effort to synthesize what the Task Force learned and a consensus on what it believes the University must do in the immediate future. It was not possible or practicable to reflect all of the numerous recommendations advanced by the Working Groups at this time. As the work progresses, however, other suggestions might be taken up.

Summary of Findings

The Task Force was presented with convincing evidence that black males 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.

Nationally as well as locally, the realities are stark.

Education

- Black males are referred to special education at rates higher than others. According to Rosa Smith of the Schott Foundation, in 2000-2001 they comprised 8.6% of national public school enrollments, and 15% of special education enrollments. They also comprised 22% of those expelled from school and 23% of those suspended.²
- The majority of black males do not perform at or above standard on city and state reading and math tests during elementary and middle school. In 2005, only 45.9% of all black students scored at or above proficient levels in reading³, and 38.9% in math.⁴
- Only about 30% of black males graduate from New York City high school in four years.

² Rosa A. Smith, “Saving Black Boys: The Elusive Promises of Public Education,” 1, in The American Prospect Online at <http://www.prospect.org/print-friendly/V!%/2/smith-ro.html>, August 24, 2005.

³ State and City English Language Arts, Grades 3, 5, 6, 7 Results by Ethnic/Racial Group; by comparison, 47.7% of Hispanic, 77.0 % of white, and 78.5% of Asian students scored at proficiency levels,

⁴ New York City Math Test Results by Ethnic/Racial Group, Grades 3,5,6,7; by comparison, 42.3% of Hispanic, 73.0 % of white, and 79.1% of Asian students scored at proficiency levels

It is clear that the public education system of this city has failed many black male youth. We are, of course, cognizant of the far-reaching reforms initiated by the leadership of the New York City Department of Education and are encouraged by the most recent reports of dramatic improvements in test results. Nonetheless, much remains to be done.

Patterns of low academic achievement by black males are evident at the University level as well.

In the fall of 2004, 10.3% of all degree seekers at The City University of New York were black males (8.6% at the bachelor's level and 12.3% at the associate's level). Of those, 52.8% reported that they had not been born in the United States.

In academic terms, those black males who do enroll at CUNY are not so different from their female and non-black counterparts. They appear to be only slightly less well prepared for college-level study. Their college admission average was 79.3 as compared to a University-wide average of 83.5 and, for those entering bachelor's programs, their combined SAT scores were 988 as compared to 1027.

Nonetheless, at the end of one year of enrollment, black males are significantly less likely to return for a second year of study than others—only 74.3% do so at the bachelor's level and only 57.1% at the associate's level. Moreover, the long-term graduation rates for black males are very low—only 27.1% of the black men who began as freshmen in baccalaureate degree programs in the Fall of 1998 had graduated six years later and only 14.6% of those that had begun in associate degree programs had done so.

Again, this is a national as well as local trend.⁵

The University enrolls and graduates far too few black males. This appears to be especially true in the case of black males born in the United States. The fact that black male entrants are not academically dissimilar to their counterparts suggests that their experiences within our colleges are not as conducive to academic success as they need to be. Indeed, focus groups conducted with currently enrolled students indicated that many of them had far too many negative experiences at the University.

Arrests and Incarceration

The lives of many black men are severely interrupted by experiences with the criminal justice system. National data indicates⁶:

⁵ Data compiled by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment from the Education Trust, College Results Online and comparing 6-year graduation rates for black males in baccalaureate studies indicate rates ranging from 56.9% to 8.4% at CUNY peer institutions (i.e., large public colleges and universities in large cities); from 48.8% to 19.4% at large public historically black colleges; and from 47.4% to 15.8% at CUNY senior colleges

⁶ See attached Report of the Criminal Justice Working Group: Black Men and the Criminal Justice System, presentation to the Chancellor's Black Male Initiative Task Force, [insert date of presentation].

- As children and young adolescents, they are more likely to be referred for adjudication and more likely to be detained in custody.
- Their likelihood of being arrested for drug-related offenses is dramatically high—although blacks only comprise 13% of the nation’s population and 13% of drug users, they represent 38% of those arrested for drug-related offenses.
- As a result of these high rates of arrest, the numbers being imprisoned are high—in 2001, approximately 100,000 black men and women entered prison after being convicted for drug-related crimes.
- In that same year, 16.1% of all black males had served time in jail, and it is now projected that 32.2% of all black men in this country will be imprisoned for at least one year during the course of their lives.

Although evidence regarding active discrimination against black males by law enforcement agencies is inconclusive, the clearly differentiated patterns of arrest and imprisonment for drug-related offenses indicate that black males who turn to criminal activity will, in all likelihood, face severe consequences. Grim employment prospects, intractable poverty, and diminished future possibilities lead far too many young men to resort to criminal behavior, despite the consequent risk of imprisonment. It is chilling to report that for every black male who is enrolled in college, another is either under arrest, incarcerated, or on parole.

According to pioneering research⁷, there are key attitudinal variables that divide black males who are oriented towards academic success from those who are not, variables that determine one’s future orientation, sense of hope about the future, degree of trust in mainstream institutions, and ability to feel safe in displaying personal vulnerability in front of other people. Their way of thinking is shaped by the threats they perceive in many different settings and the vigilance that they feel they must adopt for purposes of self-protection. It is clear that institutions, including the colleges within CUNY, have profound effects on individuals. We simply cannot afford to allow institutions, no matter how unintentionally, to contribute to despair and disillusionment on the part of black males. Those institutions must become sources of positive encouragement and support.

Employment

Black males have a profoundly disadvantaged position within the labor market. According to a June 2004 report by economist Andrew Sum and Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies⁸:

- In 2003, the black male teen employment rate was only 19.9%, a historical low for the past 50 years, nearly 20 percentage points below that of white male teens, and well below that of Hispanic teens.
- The pattern continues into young adulthood. In 2003, only 70% of black males were employed—as compared to 87% for whites and Hispanics. Many black

⁷ See attached Report of the Working Group on Social Relations

⁸ See “Trends in Black Male Joblessness and Year-Round Idleness: An Employment Crisis Ignored” at www.nupr.neu.edu/7-04/Blackmalesreport.pdf, August 24, 2005.

- males are more or less permanently unemployed. In 2002, one of every four black men was not employed in the traditional job market at all during the year.
- This lack of work is not evenly distributed among all groups of black males—44% of black men without a regular high school diploma/GED were unemployed year round in 2002 versus 26% of those with a diploma/GED and 13% of those with a bachelor's or higher degree.

We have come to understand that this deplorable labor market situation is the result of several contributing factors: continuing discrimination against black males and in favor of females and non-blacks, disqualification from consideration due to lack of educational credentials, possession of a criminal record, and the impact of changes in policies regarding child support, i.e., the earned income tax credit, which makes minimum-wage jobs more attractive to heads of household, often female single parents.

This understanding is chillingly corroborated by a study recently released by CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, wherein Princeton University researchers found that white males who have a criminal record are much more likely to be hired by employers than black males with a record, and are even somewhat more likely to be hired than black males with no criminal record.

Recommendations

The specific situations of particular black men are the result of a complex interplay among the circumstances they face, the actions taken or not taken by those they encounter, and their individual decision-making. It is indeed likely that some or many of an individual's decisions contribute to making a bad situation worse. But efforts to reverse adverse circumstances that focus only on changing individuals' behaviors would probably not be very effective.

The pioneering efforts undertaken by President Edison O. Jackson and Medgar Evers College have focused on this troubling reality. The Task Force believes that the University must now assume a leadership role and use its human and institutional resources to effect meaningful changes in the immediate future—in fact, within the remaining years covered by the University's Master Plan. The success of the Initiative will require the continued and strong leadership of the chancellery, the Board of Trustees, and the College Presidents, and the active involvement of faculty. Towards that end, we recommend that our findings and recommendations be reported at a public meeting of the Board of Trustees and that this document be circulated widely across the University.

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. As the largest urban public university in the country, CUNY has a responsibility to focus public awareness on the complexity of life for black males. CUNY

is uniquely suited to play this role. It is located in New York City, arguably the most important center of public opinion and influence in the country. Not only does CUNY educate and train thousands of teachers, managers, professionals, and leaders, it is an engine of economic growth and the generator of ideas and new knowledge.

CUNY has an obligation to express its views on public issues and policies, and it has the power to effect change. In op-ed pieces, articles, and speeches, the chancellor and others in University leadership must continue to raise awareness of the topic and promote solutions that lead to demonstrable advances in the lives and experiences of young black males. As Chancellor Goldstein stated in his public testimony before the New York City Council Higher Education and Finance Committees on May 20, 2005, “Like you, we have acknowledged that institutions of higher education must improve their ability to successfully recruit, retain, and graduate young men from minority groups, especially African-American and Caribbean-American men.” The social consequences of not doing so are considerable.

Recommendation #2: Improve Access to Higher Education

CUNY must strengthen the school-to-college pipeline to enable black male students to move into college. We are convinced that far too many young black men are being denied the opportunity to go on to success in college simply because their potential for academic achievement is unrecognized, and even actively discouraged as early as elementary school. We recognize that parents and guardians of black males are aware of the significance of school achievement, and urge that elementary and secondary educational institutions develop ways of engaging them in their sons’ education.

Because of its strong relationship with the New York City Department of Education, the University is well positioned to effect positive results in public education. It is essential that many more black males graduate from high school and that they be well prepared for college-level coursework. CUNY can alter the situation by focusing its outreach and academic enrichment activities on targeted middle and high schools in the city. We recommend that all of the University’s programs (such as College Now, GEAR UP, and the Early College Initiative) examine their effectiveness in recruiting and retaining black males and take appropriate measures to improve their performance in these areas. Community-based organizations should also be involved in the outreach efforts. We further recommend that the University develop a comprehensive approach to relationships with those organizations, and that efforts be made to include subgroups of black male youth, such as those who are in foster care, those who are young fathers, or those who may face ostracism because of their sexual orientation.

Such efforts should be fully coordinated with and supported by the recently initiated effort to enhance admissions-related activities at CUNY. We recommend increased coordination between College Now, GEAR UP and the Early College Initiative and all admissions activities. The University’s admissions staff should seek out ways to have a more consistent presence in those high schools with large numbers of black male students. A corps of CUNY students might also be enlisted to assist in this effort and

could make a significant contribution. CUNY should also more vigorously recruit black male students from all of its affiliated high schools.

Since so many young black males are no longer in school and do not possess a high school diploma, the University should also strengthen and expand its involvement in the provision of educational opportunities to out-of-school youth. CUNY Prep in the Bronx provides a promising model of how a second-chance program that is explicitly linked to the promotion of college enrollment and success can reconnect young people to meaningful participation in education. These distinct efforts, in combination with findings from research on attitudes, retention, and other relevant topics, should form part of a coordinated strategy that boosts the number of black male adolescents who successfully complete such programs and go on to college, at CUNY campuses or elsewhere.

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

Each campus should develop a plan to improve the enrollment and graduation rates of black males. The Task Force recommends that every college conduct a systematic review of the achievement of its black male students and, furthermore, examine institutional policies and practices to determine whether those might contribute to student frustration and failure.

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 professoriate, 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. We also recommend that campuses offer faculty and staff professional development workshops and other activities related to issues affecting the retention and performance of black male students.

The University should implement an enrollment management plan whose goal is to increase the admission of black males by at least 25% over the next three years, and to work with these students so that they make continuous satisfactory progress toward degree completion. At this time, a University-wide Working Group, under the auspices of the Office of Academic Affairs, is evaluating national best practices in the area of retention and tailoring those practices to fit the CUNY environment. The members of the group have been briefed on our findings and have been asked to develop specific plans regarding the retention of black male students. The group's recommendations will be ready by early fall of 2005.

Students also need meaningful attention after they matriculate. The University should establish strong mentoring and advocacy programs for black male students that include faculty, staff, and professionals from a variety of settings and disciplines. High-quality

guidance must be easily available at all of the critical periods of a student's career. Mentors can help students navigate the often complex world of college life; offer academic advisement with regard to courses and faculty; help students identify career paths; provide general advisement on personal issues; and provide job counseling. Ensuring that students have counselors from whom they can request assistance and in whom they can trust may help them overcome hurdles and solve problems that would otherwise delay or derail their college completion.

It is essential that mentoring programs include an active advocacy component wherein mentors can work with faculty and counseling staff so that students who require services and attention receive the help they need to succeed.

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

To ensure that black males have the opportunity to attend college, they must be nurtured socially, emotionally, psychologically, and educationally from elementary school onward. College must be part of their dream. Young black males must be encouraged to believe that they should and can attend college in order to become productive and successful members of society. Teachers, therefore, are a linchpin of student success. CUNY continues to be a main supplier of teachers to the New York City public schools, and every effort 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.

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. In the Academy, teaching will be portrayed as an important and valued profession, and one that will offer personal and professional satisfaction to black male adults. The Academy should include an initiative that provides incentives to promising black males to attend CUNY, enroll in the Academy, and train as teachers. In addition, CUNY campus programs that prepare school administrators should be encouraged to actively recruit black male students. These students would then become role models to young people in the schools in which they work.

CUNY should also increase its involvement in professional development for teachers in New York City. In cooperation with the curricular and instructional leaders of the Department of Education, CUNY should promote and offer continuing education programs that help teachers address all aspects of their students' social, psychological, and emotional development and look carefully at issues of race, ethnicity, and gender.

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

Enhanced educational achievement is the most powerful pathway to improved employment prospects for black males. The Task Force recommends that the University develop a set of intermediate employment strategies to increase the likelihood that black

males obtain credentials and secure employment. Those strategies could include the targeted recruitment of black males who are employed by firms with tuition-reimbursement plans and the promotion of employment opportunities for black males within such firms—especially those headed by CUNY alumni. CUNY must continue its commitment of leadership in this area.

The Task Force also recommends a strengthening of efforts to secure part-time employment opportunities that are directly related to students' courses of study. By way of example, the Task Force believes it would be especially valuable to provide candidates for degrees in education programs with paid employment in the public schools.

The University must also provide support for black males who are not college bound to obtain meaningful employment. CUNY provides extensive workforce development to tens of thousands of New York City residents each year, through campus continuing education programs, University-wide vehicles such as adult literacy programs for educationally disadvantaged students, and various training initiatives. The University should require these programs to examine their practices, from recruitment to completion to job placement, in order to ensure that their participants are diverse and include black males. Finally, through its multi-billion dollar capital improvement campaign, CUNY should encourage contractors to hire a diverse workforce that includes black males throughout all levels of its workforce, and work with the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York to ensure employment for black males on capital projects.

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

The Task Force believes that the University can help to reduce the likelihood of many black males spending years in prison. We recommend that we start early in what might otherwise become a vicious cycle. The University should develop and implement a project that enrolls adolescents and young adults in specially designed diversion and post-incarceration programs at the CUNY colleges. The program's staff should work with adjudicating agencies and with the public schools to identify black male students who are involved or at risk for becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

Such at-risk students will need thoughtful and targeted support to change the trajectory of their lives. A program dedicated to assisting young black men to envision a new path in their lives through education and internships or jobs on campus could be transformative. The national literature suggests that without positive intervention, young offenders released back into the community too often slip back into a pattern of wrongdoing. CUNY can help change that cycle by focusing on constructive, educationally driven programs that provide an optimistic future for young black males.

In addition, we recommend that the University review and consider an expansion of its involvement in the provision of educational opportunities to individuals in custody in the city's and state's correctional institutions and enhance the college admissions services provided to individuals released from custody.

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

We suggest that CUNY 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. The institute would likely have a broader mandate—to be developed and approved according to the University's policies and procedures.

We would expect that the institute, working with other University institutes and every campus in the system, would generate sophisticated research, reach out to community constituents programmatically, hold national symposia and conferences, and manage the varied activities of this initiative. CUNY should become a clearinghouse for information and research in this area. The Office of Academic Affairs should support the start-up of the institute financially and should bring together an advisory board to assist in its establishment. A dynamic and accomplished researcher/scholar should be identified to provide leadership and oversee its management.

The University should also devote substantial efforts to securing public and private funding intended to advance the work of the new institute.

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

The Task Force further recommends that small groups of experts 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 prepare the plans and offer them to the Task Force members for review within one academic semester. 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 Task Force recommends that the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs develop a set of specific benchmarks that can be used to evaluate the University's progress in implementing its recommendations and, most important, in achieving the goals it believes are essential. We also recommend that those benchmarks be incorporated within the University's Performance Management Plan.