Doing Right By Our Men of Color:
How the Minority Male Initiative is Fostering Encouragement, Engagement, and Success

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What were your first experiences when starting college?
What barriers/road blocks did you face when you started college?
The Minority Male Initiative: Our Process

- Diverse group of managers, faculty, staff gathered to talk about how we address the lack of success of minority males.
- Consensus direction: *Ask the students!*
- We asked specialized program leaders to send us minority male students willing to share their thoughts and experience with us.
Our First Meeting: We began with individual introductions ... 3 ½ hours later, we finished with the introductions
Our students’ voices . . .

- My mother didn't protect me from my Dad and brothers. I learned not to trust anyone. If my Dad didn't die, I wouldn't be here. I landed in the foster care system. I learned not to trust anyone.
- You have to learn to not be afraid to share your story.
- No one in high school talked to us about college.
- Getting arrested was a blessing. I have come back to school to be an educator.
- School didn’t scare me as much as home did
- I no longer live for the moment -- I live for tomorrow.
- I'm not where I want to be yet, but thank God I'm not where I was before.
What were your first impressions/experiences when you started college?

- “I don’t belong here.”
- “Where do I go for help?”
- “Who’s going to understand my situation?”
- “Are THEY going to help students like ME?”
- “Can I really go back to school?”
- “What if …”
What are the barriers/road blocks you faced when you started college?

- Academic Direction
  - Don’t know how to register
  - Don’t have a computer or internet access
  - Unsure of course selection (and don’t know major)

- Campus Culture
  - Unable to understand professors; they go too fast; they talk over us
  - Not sure where to go/how to get help

- Financial
  - Unable to pay for books; need financial aid but applied late
  - Don’t qualify for financial aid because of my family situation
  - I heard college makes you broke
  - Transportation needs; family demands; need a job
What students told us Mt. SAC needs to do

- Connect students to **services/resources**
- Town Hall **meetings** to keep students informed
- Better services for **job** opportunities
- Share **success stories** for motivation
- **Outings;** community work
- **Study halls;** study skills
- Opportunities to do **research**
- **Networking** opportunities
- **Culturally relevant courses**
- **Safe spaces**
Why do colleges need a Minority Male Initiative?

- The Mt. SAC story is a lot like your story: Data doesn’t lie.
  - Overall, success rates for African American, Latino and Pacific Islander students, especially males, are more disparate compared to all other students:
    - Enrollment in college
    - Successful completion of gateway courses in English and Math
    - Degree and Transfer completion
  - Success rates for Dream, Foster Youth and Disabled students are even more challenged.
African American students are far below equity in English composition
Male African American and Latino/a students are far below equity in Transfer
African American, Latino and Pacific Islander males are below equity in:
  ◦ Access
  ◦ English writing and math completion
  ◦ Certificate and degree completion
  ◦ Transfer
Foster Youth, AB 540/Dream, and disabled are far below equity in:
  ◦ Course and ESL completion
  ◦ Certificate and degree completion
  ◦ Transfer
What are the equity issues on your campus?
Insights We Gained in Working with Minority Males

- Help Seeking Behaviors
- Imposter Syndrome; Fear of Success
- Identity Development
- Code Switching; Status Sequencing
- Social Capital
- Resiliency; Grit
- Significant Other
Help Seeking Behaviors: Minority Males frequently do not seek out help or support services

- I can do it by myself
- “No shame to ask”
- Looking for people who look like me
- Safe spaces – not knowing who to trust
- Unknown territory – what do I even say/ask for?
- “Playing it off” – look like I belong
Imposter Syndrome; Fear of Success: Men of color have had little exposure to college; academic success

[Tino]

- Lack of people who look like me
- Lack of understanding about what I need
- I want to be here, but I also don’t
- I don’t fit; I don’t belong
- I don’t always get this “college thing”
- I’m not always sure what I need to ask
- Many question/mock my trying to be a college student
- Who am I fooling? People like me aren’t supposed to be successful; aren’t supposed to get a college degree
Identity Development: Males from diverse cultural backgrounds frequently are in search of their own identities.

- Who am I?
- Where are people like me?
- How do I fit in as a college student?
- How do I keep my friends (“from the hood”)?
- But nobody here has a story like mine …
Code Switching; Status Sequencing:
Minority males have little exposure to “moving up”

- I don’t talk like everyone else
- I don’t even have these words in my vocabulary
- I don’t know most of what is being said; I can’t relate
- I’ve never spoken with a faculty member
- How do I fit in?
- How will I know what to say/do?
- I’ve never been to a theater production or an educational conference
- I don’t know how to act around certain people
Social Capital: Men of color possess many strengths and knowledge [TW]

- Being street smart means you know how to survive and to adapt and to change environments
- Knowing how to code switch helps you to navigate
- Cultural tolerance and understanding of diversity
- Life experiences prepare me to do many things
- Ability to help others having lived through similar experiences; being a mentor
- Experiencing the power of being educated


**Resiliency:** Minority males have the ability to persevere; they are survivors [HC]

- Once I start something, I want to finish
- Even though I failed, I want to prove that teacher wrong
- I have no one to support me – if I make it, I make it on my own
- I finally learned that it’s okay to go to tutoring
- This is the third time I’m taking this class, but I’m a pass it this time, for sure
- Stay the course; finish strong
- If I give up, I’m giving up on myself
- Stay humble, but stay hungry
Significant Other --  Everyone needs at least “one significant other” [Tino]

- Someone who encourages them, takes an interest in them
- Someone who understands what it’s like to be a first generation, low income, male of color college student
- Someone that will provide “tough love” when necessary
- Someone who is part of the college/represents education
- The hug I got after I failed
- Feeling alone is my constant companion
Students worked collaboratively to define the critical pathways for our work

- Academics
- Services
- Peer to Peer
- Cultural/Ethnic Identity
Connect students to services/resources
Town Hall **meetings** to keep students informed
Better services for **job** opportunities
Share **success stories** for motivation
**Outings**; community work
**Study halls**; study skills
Opportunities to do **research**
**Networking** opportunities
**Culturally relevant courses**
Safe spaces
What We Have Put in Place

- Student Ambassadors
- Town Hall Meetings—Mountie Mentor Meetings
- Job opportunities -- SSEED
- Share Success Stories – Speakers
- Outings – Special events
- Study Hall—Math Success Lab; Late Night Study
- Networking—Conference attendance
- Culturally Relevant Courses—ADT in Ethnic Studies under development; Digital Stories/Reader’s Theater; Fale Fono/Indaba
- Safe Spaces – Equity Center
- Professional Development—Faculty and Classified
The Student Ambassadors Are Launched!

- Students say they are the best to reach their own, especially in connecting them with programs and services
- Progress has been immediate and overwhelmingly successful
- Student ambassadors have the pride and fulfillment of assisting other students and the responsibility
- Lost and disconnected students have help to find their way
Town Hall Meetings/Networking
Monthly Mentoring Meetings

[EL]

- Open to all students but target equity student populations
- Faculty, staff, managers serve as mentors
- Each meeting lasts only 2 hours long and includes:
  - Student to student engagement activities
  - Topical presentation
  - Table group mentoring discussions
  - Motivational closing
- Additional activities:
  - Field trips; movies
  - Cultural events
  - Campus-wide Student Success Conference – FOR STUDENTS
A tool for engagement
- Many students pursue college are “all alone”
- At the worksite, someone knows you and cares

A tool for persistence
- Students get paid (financial reward);
- Students go to work and go to class
- Required academic progress checks

Skill development
- Employers and program provide professional skill building: office etiquette, dress attire, soft skills development
- Regular training provided from Microsoft office to financial literacy to ethics in the workplace and networking skills
SSEED Statistics

- 95% completion rate in year 1 of pilot
- Overall GPA average 2.64
- Placements:
  Research Office—“Opportunities to do Research”
  Payroll
  Food Services
  Academic Divisions
  Business and Kinesiology
  Student Services
Our January Meeting (winter intersession) n=200
Share Success Stories--Speakers

- Cesar Cruz: “To Organize for Change We Must Author Our Voice”
- Sonia Nazario: “From Trauma to Resiliency: Struggles and Strengths in Student’s Journeys to College”
- Colson Whitehead: “The Underground Railroad, Student Equity, and Pathways”
Outings and Special Events

◦ Manzanar (concentration camp)
◦ Million Man March – Washington, D.C.
◦ Movies: Hidden Figures, Black Panther, Spare Parts, They Call Me Malala
◦ Theater: Wicked, Motown, Hamilton Aladdin
Study Hall – (not tutoring)

Students define the need for group study – and a resistance for “tutoring”

- Open study labs in “safe spaces” (equity programs)
- Finals late night group study
- Math Success Lab
- Math Preparation Modules (ALEKS)
- STEM Center
- Sunday Night Library Hours
Networking

- Student attendance/participation in professional conferences:
  - Umoja
  - APAHE
  - NASPA
  - RP Group – Strengthening Student Success
Leadership Retreats

- Off-campus retreats
  - Building community
  - Discovering sense of self
  - Hosted at 4-year institutions
    - Cal Poly Pomona, UCLA
    - Envisioning transfer

Topics:
- Imposter Syndrome
- Emotional Intelligence
- Code Switching
- Social Capital
Culturally Relevant Courses

- ADT in Ethnic Studies under development
- Digital Stories: students write and produce their personal, culturally-based life stories
- Reader’s Theater: students develop and produce a performance highlighting their voices, experiences and messages
Culturally-based Efforts: Fale Fono; Indaba

- Becoming a village – a safe place to share impacts of stereotypes, goals and dreams, “each one, check one”, “no shame to ask” (confronting pridefulness)
- Utilizing a familiar cultural practice to help students find a focus, validation of self/culture, motivation, sense of belonging.
- Sharing of personal testimonies, guest speakers, resource workshops
Digital Stories

- Creative, self-reflective process to capture students’ uniqueness, personal journeys, that serve as a motivation to students and faculty, staff, managers
- Method is highly impactful and offers incredible opportunities for dialog, greater understanding and inspiration and opportunities to tell the untold stories… a powerful educational tool
Safe Spaces

• Development of equity-focused program locations
  ◦ Pride Center
  ◦ Dream Center
  ◦ REACH Foster Youth
  ◦ Veterans
  ◦ Aspire (Umoja)
  ◦ Arise (AANAPISI)

• New Equity Center
• Multicultural Center in new Student Center
• Ally Training
The New Equity Center

- The college’s recognition and acknowledgement of the need for such a physical place.
- Design: open and welcoming; safe places; cultural celebration and sensitivity; academic areas; sharing areas; private offices for counseling support; computer lab and study spaces (individual and group)
- The use of art and images to relate and inspire
- Programs: Aspire, Arise, Foster Youth, Dream
Approaches

• Colleges can better serve men of color by implementing effective practices for all students, while also emphasizing campus diversity, cultural competence, and other strategies for reducing stereotype threat. CCRC

• But what can and should colleges really do?

• Do you opt just to improve conditions for all students to improve success for men of color?
You Need Both

- **Institutional interventions**
  - College-wide approaches to enhance campus climate, student engagement, equity-infused success practices

- **Specialized Support Services**
  - Ongoing efforts as well as new initiatives
  - Services that specifically target hard to reach students
  - Don’t be dissuaded by the rhetoric around “boutique programs” – our students need these specific-based interventions
Specialized Student Services Programs

- Aspire (Umoja): African American students
- Bridge: Learning communities for basic skills and first generation students (predominantly Latino)
- Arise (AANAPISI): Asian and Pacific Islander students
- Dream (undocumented): Latino and Asian students
- REACH/Foster Youth: Students in/exiting the foster system
- TRiO and EOPS: Low income, first generation
- Disabled Students (ACCESS): learning disabilities, visual and hearing impaired, autism, acquired brain injury
- CalWORKs/CARE: Single parents, county-supported
- Veterans Resource Center: Veterans and current military
- Pride Center: LGBTQ student support and resources
- HBR: Homeless and Basic Resources; CalFRESH; food pantry
Continuation of Initial Agenda

- **Academics**: collaboration with tutorial resources (LAC, MARC, Writing Center, STEM) for study groups and safe learning environments; tutor training; workshops; summer focus opportunities

- **Services**: Latino-based services – ¡Lanzate!

- **Peer to Peer**: outreach to K-12; enhance inreach efforts; expansion of Student Ambassadors

- **Cultural and Ethnic Identity**: collaborate on Ethnic/Gender Studies courses and AAT degree; in Social Justice; faculty development; workshops/speakers

- **Services to Marginalized Groups;**
Follow Through on Original Recommendations

- **Milestone Recognitions:** keeping students motivated and on course
- **Leadership Development:** cross-cultural leadership forum and retreat
- **Professional Development:** continued focus on affective domain; increasing depth of reach to faculty
- **Research:** M2C3 Research Surveys – students, faculty, stakeholders; harder/closer look at Multiple Measures placement and impacts on men of color
Group Identified Issues

- Campus-wide introduction of MMI
- Core group intra-communication for students; critical connections
- Career exploration and networking
- Transfer facilitation
- Workshops/training/speakers (navigating the dominant culture, help-seeking and help-receiving)
- Social capital (capitalizing on college knowledge)
- Professional development (training for faculty; institutional culture)
Unified Approach to Equity: Students, Staff, Faculty, Managers as a Collective Entity
“The pain of the past gives you power for the future”
Institutional Approaches and Interventions: It’s everyone’s responsibility

- Changing the culture of the campus – campus wide acknowledgement of equity -- Not just a Student Services focus
- Including Academic/Instruction; Faculty
- Involving the entire campus community — faculty leadership is essential
- Incorporating professional development— Faculty Flex focus; New Faculty Training based on equity
Partnership with Instruction

• Library and Learning Resources: making them friendly and accessible

• STEM: demystifying science/technology/engineering math through fun, interactive activities (Science and Math Field Day, Robotics)
Confronting Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

- Prior life; prior scripts; prior reality
  - How to change the scripts?
    - You’ll just be another statistic
  - From hopeless to hopeful
  - From flight to fight

- Dealing with the fear of failure
  - People like me aren’t supposed to succeed

- Anticipatory socialization
  - This is all new to me, I don’t fit in. How am I supposed to act?
To inspire and motivate students to see their potential in education as a lifelong career by aspiring towards their academic/educational goals.

**Recommendations**
- Collaborative study halls with peers
- Group study
- Subject-based help
- Book donations [reserve textbooks]
- Academic progress checks
- Career exploration field trips
- Milestone recognition events – elevate your sense of accomplishment: celebrate all successes, including grades (GPA); awards “rookie of the year”/“MVP”
- [Sunday library hours]
- [Math Boot Camp]
Programs and services designed to enhance/enrich minority students’ (males and females) educational, personal and emotional needs.

**Recommendations**

- Interpersonal communication workshops
- Mobile Inreach Unit (MIU) – student ambassadors*
- Community service opportunities
- “Latino” program like Aspire and Arise
- Outreach efforts to minority high school students
- [New Equity Center: Aspire, Arise, Dream, REACH]
Peer to Peer

An individual who motivates, relates and understand the experience of another while attempting to create a bond with individuals to work toward accomplishing each other’s goals.

Recommendations
- Multiple “3 man teams” to interact with students daily, proactively searching for students where they gather to provide resource information
- Peer tutors and peer support groups
- Weekly check-ups (peer to peer)
- Mentoring
To recognize traditional practices and cultural values along with multi-cultural collaboration between each other.

**Recommendations**

- Ethnic Studies courses
- Multi-cultural Center
- Cultural workshops
- Professional/faculty training
- Cultural field trips
- Cultural campus events
- [Washington DC/HBCU Tour, A2Mend, APAHE, Wicked, Spare Parts, He Named Me Malala]
- [Digital Stories]
- [Ethnic/Gender Studies Course Review]
MT. SAC MMI: YOU CAN AND YOU WILL
DEFINING SUCCESS - YOUR WAY

• Know what you want from yourself
• Stay on course
• Deal with disappointments and setbacks
• Acceptance and forgiveness– what we need to do to move on
Make choices and decisions that allow you to work in your best interests.
• Our families don’t always understand what we are going through.
• Our families don’t always know what to do.
• Sometimes our families are not there for us.
• We expect that “family” means our biological family.
RE-DEFINING FAMILY

• Family can be what you make.
• Family is about relationships you have with others.
• Family is made up of those you know and trust.
• Own all your own fears.
• But do not walk alone.

• Don’t look at the obstacles in every opportunity ...
• Stay focused on the opportunities in every obstacle.

• Just enough is not enough.
• Own all your triumphs and successes.
• Prove others wrong.
• It’s not just about who you know, but who knows you.
• We are the good statistic.
• Celebrate your successes.
• Feel your power.
• Claim your social capital.
• Your past is not your future.
• You are worthy.
• You are capable.
• Keep your success in front of you where you can see it, touch it, and continuously move it forward.
• Temporary setbacks aren’t permanent.

• Don’t let anyone or anything derail you.
• You own your destiny.
• You **CAN** and you **WILL**!
WE ARE FAMILY