

INITIATIVE: MINORITY MALE MENTORING

THE SPARK:

As the new millennium began, administrators in NC Community Colleges started to examine retention and graduation rates among the system's students. They discovered that the rates for minority males had consistently been among the lowest of any demographic group at community colleges in North Carolina, and there was no indication the rate would rise without intervention.

In 2003, grant funding from the Governor's Crime Commission was made available to the North Carolina Community College System for projects that would improve the college success rate of minority males. NCCCS asked college administrators for proposals for innovative and challenging projects to begin that fall in support of the Minority Male Mentoring Initiative.

Initially, the Minority Male Mentoring Program focused on first-generation students with low grade point averages or a history of substance abuse. As the years passed, college personnel recognized a need to support all men of color through coaching and mentoring because low persistence, graduation and transfer rates were consistently a problem for minority males, even for those without obvious markers for being "at risk."

ISSUE ADDRESSED BY INITIATIVE:

Since the program began, the NC Community Colleges Minority Male Mentoring Program (3MP) has provided a lifeline to young men who showed great potential but lacked a support system for navigating a college environment. The program has guided these men through personal, professional and academic growth by consistently focusing on the completion of developmental and college-credit courses, persistence from semester to semester and graduation. Minority males are encouraged to transfer to University of North Carolina campuses, where they may find continuing support services geared to their needs.

Prior to SuccessNC, the 3MP was not assured of year-to-year funding. The initiative has raised awareness of the needs addressed by Minority Male programs and helped to ensure continued support from the state legislature and federal grants.

During the 2013-14 academic year, colleges operating

Minority Male Mentoring programs are required to focus on faculty and counselor support, student development activities and providing peer tutors and study ambassadors.

WHAT WE DID:

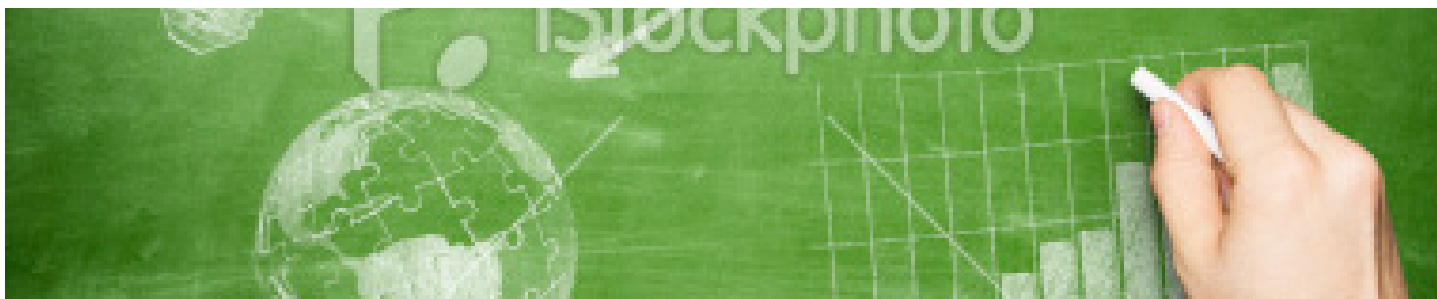
The Minority Male Mentoring project was begun in fall 2003 at six pilot schools with the idea that the programs developed could be scaled to serve minority male students across North Carolina. The following year, the programs were funded for a second year through the Governor's Crime Commission. In 2007, the NC General Assembly appropriated funds to expand the program, and 15 colleges added 3MP to their campuses. Additional colleges have been added with each successive year.

During the 2012-2013 fiscal year, 46 of the state's community colleges had funding for programs unique to their institutions and the demographics of their service areas. Funding was allocated from a \$900,000 legislative appropriation to 3MP and a \$300,000 federal North Carolina College Access Challenge Grant. The federal grant came from collaboration between NCCCS and the University of North Carolina General Administration, a partnership that grew out of the community college's SuccessNC initiative and the university system's UNC Tomorrow initiative.

The UNC System is implementing programs on each of its 16 campuses to provide support and continuity for transfer students who found success with the support of 3MP on community college campuses.

In addition to building collaboration between NC Community Colleges and the UNC System, the North Carolina College Access Challenge Grant has allowed increased collaboration with North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority.

When 3MP was in the pilot phase, the target population was first-generation students with a GPA below 2.5 or a history of substance abuse. The program has been expanded to recognize that there are many more barriers to retention and graduation. Most recently, the focus has been on students' academic, personal and professional growth coupled with issues surrounding cultural differences and student experiences.



Under SuccessNC guidelines, each program is required to:

- 1) Provide at least one leadership position, often known as a coach, to coordinate the program.
- 2) Identify a cohort of students.

STUDENT SUCCESS STORY: ANDRE WIGGINS

André Wiggins was once a prison inmate. Today he is a successful business owner and a graduate of Edgecombe Community College with a certificate in business administration/business leadership. He's nearly completed an associate degree in business administration.

He attributes his success to the college. "ECC has been feeding me the drive and motivation to keep going," says Wiggins. "I didn't graduate high school; I received my GED in prison. This is my first graduation, and I can't tell you how much it means to me."

Wiggins runs his own janitorial maintenance company, Clean Sweep, which serves clients in three states.



- 3) Provide a structured relationship between each participant and a member of the campus community.
- 4) Provide college transfer transition workshops and visits to campuses of four-year colleges and universities.
- 5) Require a study skills class during the first semester.
- 6) Provide career counseling and academic advising.
- 7) Recommend that students enroll in at least 12 credit hours per semester with a focus on core courses.
- 8) Provide a written academic plan for each participant.
- 9) Provide service learning opportunities each semester.

Each program seeks to:

- 1) Form partnerships with local community-based programs serving the targeted population and collaborate with local, state and community-based organizations.
- 2) Recruit faculty, staff and peer mentors and provide training and workshops for them.
- 3) Coordinate personal and professional development seminars for participants.
- 4) Implement special programs to prevent drug and substance abuse among minority males and promote a healthy college experience.
- 5) Promote student satisfaction with the college experience, retention and graduation.
- 6) Monitor the progress of participating students.
- 7) Report the status of goals and objectives established by the programs.

RESULTS AND PROGRESS TO DATE:

Audits of the 3MP operations of 12 colleges were performed over summer 2013. Utilizing completed forms and standardized budget reports, an analysis of individual college programs was done. Randomly selected student files from participating colleges were examined to determine if the colleges had been adhering to the hallmarks of the program.

Since 3MP became a SuccessNC initiative, data on student GPA, withdrawals with point of exit noted, student persistence and student graduation is collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of individual college programs. Success is determined by comparing the performance of minority males in 3MP to the performance of minority males not in 3MP. Performance is

also compared to that of white males.

Success measures for 3MP show the initiative is generating results. The number of participants increased from 844 in Fall 2011 to 1,547 in Fall 2012. More than 75 percent of Fall 2011 participants were still enrolled in Spring 2013, and 67 percent persisted to Fall 2013.

During the 2011-12 academic year, the fall to spring retention rate for 3MP participants was 78 percent compared to 68 percent for men of color not in the program, 71 percent for white males and 71 percent for all students.

In Fall 2012, 3MP participants at 46 colleges were 82 percent black, 5 percent Latino, 2 percent American Indian, 4 percent white, 2 percent multiple races and 4 percent unknown. Asian and Hawaiian participation was less than 1 percent.

FUTURE PLANS AND GOALS:

Forty-one colleges were each awarded \$20,500 for their 3MP programs during 2013-2014 based on detailed proposals to increase the retention and graduation of minority male students through improved coaching. Funded 3MP programs must expend their awards in four areas: faculty and counselor support, general operating cost, student development activities and student support wages for peer tutors and study ambassadors.

The funded mentoring programs will be analyzed for effectiveness and to determine if a program model can be identified for implementation on more college campuses. Anticipated outcomes for strong programs include higher persistence, graduation and transfer rates from semester to semester and year to year for mentoring participants compared to students who did not participate in a mentoring program.



Minority male students listen closely to a presentation at Pitt Community College.