FINISHING THE RACE: INCREASING STUDENT PERSISTENCE AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES AT AVERETT UNIVERSITY

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Outline of Presentation

- Background
- Purpose
- Scope
- Approach
- Work Plan
- Risks/Constraints
- Quality Assurance Plan
- Results/Benefits
- Reflection
- Areas for Future Study
- References
Background

- Averett University
  - Founded in 1859
  - Baptist General Association of Virginia
  - Became co-educational in 1969

- Small, private university
  - Enrollment-driven

- Less than 1000 traditional, undergraduate students
  - 60% Male; 40% Female
  - 33% African-American
Purpose

- Between fall 2015 and spring 2016 semester, university lost 78 students.
  - One-third were African-American Males
  - Freshmen did not retain as well as upperclassmen
- University lost money as a result of students not being retained
Scope

- Retention of African-American males became an issue overtime
- Keeping African-American male students escalated from being a priority to a necessity
- Collaboration with Student Life office became an essential task
- Multi-faceted approach to address the scope
Approach

- Created a scholarship database that provided scholarship information to African-American male students
- Improved the faculty/staff mentorship opportunities that were available to African-American male students
- Created a position to coordinate diversity and multicultural education initiatives
- Educated African-American males regarding academic resources that were available to them
- Organized a committee to meet regularly to discuss the current state of African-American male student success
Work Plan

- Created a scholarship database that provided scholarship information to African-American male students (Completion Date: August 1, 2017)
- Improved the faculty/staff mentorship opportunities that were available to African-American male students (Completion Date: December 14, 2018)
- Created a position to coordinate diversity and multicultural education initiatives
  - Clubs and orgs (Completion Date: March 20, 2017)
  - Additional Staffing (Completion Date: July 01, 2017)
- Educated African-American males regarding academic resources that were available to them (Completion Date: May 1, 2018)
- Organized a committee to meet regularly to discuss the current state of African-American male student success (Completion Date: December 1, 2016)
### Risks and Constraints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academically underprepared students</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate financial awareness</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate faculty/staff support</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate faculty/staff of color</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient training for university personnel</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate protocol to retain students who separate from Athletics</td>
<td>High</td>
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</tbody>
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### Constraints:
- Enrollment management
  - *Limitations on data provided to doctoral student*
- Funding
  - *Staffing*
  - *Other Resources*
- Potential for biases
# Quality Assurance Plan

## Need | Activity
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**Scholarship** | 1. Review and update database on a monthly basis to reflect the most current information  
2. Identify strong student workers to train new student workers on the process of seeking scholarship information  
3. Keep Financial Aid Office, as well as other offices updates as often as possible
**Mentorship** | 1. Assemble the two teams to meet on a re-occurring basis  
2. Create opportunities for dialogue in the separate groups  
3. Circulate any “woots” or “woes” necessary to improve the entire mentorship process
**Diversity and Multicultural Education position** | 1. Create and advise the Brother for Brother program at Averett University  
2. Identify a second person to co-advice the organization that has passion for working with the group of students in need  
3. Assemble interested students  
4. Plan programs on campus to get the targeted students involved  
5. Assess and share the success of the program  
6. Advocate for growth
**Education on Academic Resources** | 1. Identify spaces in the Student Success Center for students to be able to get information the offered resources  
2. Engage faculty more in the process of educating students about educational resources  
3. Extend the hours of the Student Success Center, to potentially gather more students to actually receive the information  
4. Encourage members of the student success center to go to classes, to inform students of services  
5. Encourage student life staff to program in programming spaces and residence hall spaces to get the word out
**Committee** | 1. Identify issues more immediate involving African-American male students, in hopes of coming up with a solution more quickly  
2. Strengthen relationship between faculty and staff to better meet the needs of students  
3. Act in the best interest of African-American male students
Results and Benefits

- Shed light on institutional deficiencies
- Proved “it’s cheaper to keep him”
- Culture shift needed within admissions processes
- New clubs and organizations
  - Brother4Brother
    - Coming soon: Sister4Sister
  - Black Student Union
  - Kappa Alpha Psi
    - 5 new members
Reflection

- Challenges with implementation
- Collaboration with Dean of Students was essential
- Resources provided from VP of Enrollment
- Athletic impact and involvement
- Faculty/staff are at the core of the issue
- More direct involvement with students
Areas for Future Study

- Analyze the university’s financial aid model
- Prioritize diversity and inclusion within the university’s strategic plan
- Explore federal and state grants to fund diversity and inclusion initiatives
  - Center for Diversity and Inclusion
- Expand to different colleges and universities
Demonstration of Leadership

- Identified a need
- Took initiative
- Engaged in collaboration
- Communicated!!!
- Sought Innovative Approaches
- Worked through challenges
  - *adaptive challenges*
  - *technical challenges*
Questions
References


