Student Recruitment & Retention

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1. Project Summary

The UJIMA Summer Bridge Program is designed to bridge the gap between high school and college by providing students with tools needed to succeed in their areas of study. This mentoring project will foster partnerships between faculty/staff and current EWU students in an effort to assist incoming first time freshman in transforming their academic pursuits into reality. The UJIMA Retention efforts will include but not limited to a Summer Bridge Program and a yearlong freshman mentoring experience. This project will serve 20 African American first year Eastern Washington University (EWU) freshmen and 10 upper classman as mentors. The director of Africana Education Program and African students, will oversee the project.

2. Detailed Proposal

Statement of the Problem

EWU’s Africana Education Program (AEP) is proposing the UJIMA Retention Project in an effort to be more aggressive in the retention of African American students at the university. Based on Eastern Washington University graduate report (2009), 37.8% of black students graduated as compared to 48.5% white students, completing the degree within six years. The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education reported 42%, the national rate for graduating Black students in 2005 compared to 62% of white students. Thus, EWU is 4.15% below the national average. The primary goal of the UJIMA Retention Project is to increase the retention and graduation rates of African American students to the national average. Based on EWU student data collected from the Office of Admission’s, the approximate GPA for the African American student cohort of 2009 and 2010 was 2.7. This would suggest that these students were not

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1 UJIMA –a Swahili word meaning (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers’ and sisters’ problems our problems, and to solve them together.
academically at-risk by the end of their first year. The 2.7 GPA criteria is used to evaluate students status because one negative grade will jeopardize the college’s minimum GPA (2.0). This compelling data lead to further exploration into the variety of socio-cultural and personal factors which may ultimately affect African American student retention and graduation. The UJIMA initiative will attempt to positively impact college retention using an integrative model; using multiple support services; and other mechanism to improve retention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>EWU</th>
<th>State Rates</th>
<th>National Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>37.85%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>47.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>68%</strong></td>
<td><strong>53%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Reported by institutions to NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Graduation rates are for first-time, full-time students completing a bachelor’s or equivalent degree within six years.*

**Project Objectives**

**UJIMA Faculty/Staff/Senior Mentoring Project**

Faculty, staff and peer mentoring has a long and proven history in the academy. Each participant will have a senior member (faculty/staff/upperclassmen) mentor in an attempt to assist these students in reaching their professional goals. This relationship supplies mentee’s with encouragement, feedback, training, political guidance, interpersonal support, and professional visibility (Kalbfleish & Davies, 1991). The UJIMA mentoring program will be a catalyst for introducing and connecting low to moderately achieving African American students (<2.8 GPA) with senior students with a GPA above 3.0 and Faculty/Staff with similar fields of interest. Research suggest (>3.0 GPA) are typically well integrated in their academic department and/or university (e.g. McNair Scholars, Honors Programs) and are highly likely to graduate. This program has the approval and support of the Africana Education Program and the College of Social Behavioral Sciences and Social Work.

UJIMA will be implemented to improve EWU’s overall retention rate, therefore increasing diversity across campus. The cornerstone of education is diversity and the equality of all involved in the educational process. Change builds through transformational leadership. Transformational leadership permits educational institutions to enact institutional change through a shared and authentic vision; it creates a learning environment that engages a shared community (Hallenger, 2003).

**UJIMA Mentoring Project**

**Mentor Training**

There will be a two day training to ensure that mentors understand the scope and limits of their roles and responsibilities. The training will also address the following:

- Help them develop the skills and attitudes they need to perform well in their role
- Introduce them to the concept of identity development
- Provide information about confidentiality and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Provide information about program requirements and supports for mentors
- Build the confidence of participants
- Problem solving

*Mentor Expectations*

There will be quarterly luncheons and other social gatherings of mentor (s) and mentee (s). The mentor will be expected to make periodic contact with their mentee (s) at least twice a month (see details below). Potential contact activities include e-mail, office hour visitations, lunch meetings, attending invited student events and UJIMA programming activities. We encourage mentors to mentor at least one (or preferably two students) and engage with him/her for at least 2 hours every month. Mentors will be encouraged to e-mail their mentee (s) at least twice a month simply to check in or invite them to office hours, or department or campus events. Mentors are not obligated or expected to meet with students off campus, although this is not prohibited (e.g. community service activity). A *mentor commitment is one year from the first time of contact, is expected. with an option to renew for a second year.* In respectful consideration of mentors time and work load responsibilities to all students, committee work, research and teaching; one UJIMA mentee is the expected norm and two is the maximum.

Mentors will be engaging African American who may not necessarily meet traditional admissions criteria and are typically excluded. The literature suggests that marginalized students are more likely to change majors, transfer schools, or “fall between the cracks” and drop out of college due to low GPA, personal problems or other factors. The UJIMA mentoring project is an opportunity to assist and support the inclusion, retention and self efficacy of these students to achieve academically and to graduate. One aim of the project is to recognize and formalize the work faculty/staff do to support students from all walks of life. This is also a time for faculty/staff to get some small, but formal recognition for their nontraditional faculty/staff-student engagement and mentoring.

Mentor training will be based on the models and concepts of *Students Helping Students: A Guide for Peer Educators on College Campuses* by (Newton & Ender, 2010). Mentor training will be conducted by Dr. Bartlett, Stafford, and Finnie.

In sum, the three phase time commitment for UJIMA mentors is a follows:

1. A minimum of one face-to-face engagement per month (minimum)
2. Minimum of one e-mail (or phone) engagement per month (minimum)
3. Attend a quarterly UJIMA sponsored programs with your mentee (s).

In conclusion, UJIMA is a holistic initiative with multiple components. However, the personal and supportive relationships established through the mentoring program are a valuable component for participant success.